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The Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics is a peer-reviewed journal published annually with the support of the International Society of Christian Apologetics to foster scholarly discussion of ideas among evangelical scholars relevant to the defense of the Christian Faith. It includes articles from a wide variety of apologetically relevant fields, including philosophy, ethics, theology, biblical studies, history, and missions.

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PURPOSE

To foster scholarly discussion of ideas among evangelical scholars relevant to the defense of the historic Christian Faith in accordance with the Doctrinal Statement of the Society.

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Editor's Introduction

For some time now there have been voices within the church (and without) declaring the death of apologetics as a viable Christian enterprise. Apologetics, it is claimed, is but the relic of the modern era in which it was believed that it is not only possible but also necessary to "prove" the Christian faith. In today's postmodern era, so the argument goes, people simply need to experience the faith personally rather than being argued into it.

However, while personal experience is certainly crucial to the faith, there is no reason to think that it must be in conflict with the need for an intellectual assessment of Christian truth claims or even for a defense of them. Indeed, evidence suggests that far from being a dying discipline, apologetics is thriving now more than ever. A simple Google search of the word "apologetics," for example, garners nearly 4.5 million hits! And apologetics isn't only thriving in online chat-rooms and blogs; its impact is being felt even at the highest levels of academia. Just last week (from the time this editorial was written) world renown philosophers Alvin Plantinga and Daniel Dennett debated the rationality of theism and naturalism before a room packed full of professional philosophers at an American Philosophical Association meeting in Chicago. Everywhere you look there seems to be a growing interest in questions of faith.

If the response to our inaugural issue of *JISCA* was any indication of the state of apologetics, then we would have to concur that apologetics is thriving indeed. Since the release of our first volume, we have received a host of top-rate submissions from across the spectrum of academic disciplines. And we're delighted to be able to share some of them with you in this second volume.

Missiologist David Hesselgrave begins this volume with an assessment of the need for apologetics in cross-cultural ministry using Japan as a "case study." He calls for a stronger relationship between academic apologists and cross-cultural missionaries. Next, in his insightful discussion of the uses and abuses of Mark 11:20-25, Kirk MacGregor argues that the traditional understanding of Jesus' saying in this passage can cause believers to question the authenticity of their faith. But according to MacGregor, when understood in context this

passage is not about one's "faith to move mountains" generally but is specifically about proclaiming judgment on the Temple mount. Understood rightly, then, this passage should be no hindrance to one's faith but should encourage Christians to take a stand in faith against corrupt religious institutions.

In our third piece, Hendrik van der Breggen assesses the recent philosophical defense by Roger Montague of Dawkins' "infinite regress" argument against the existence of God. Contrary to Montague's claims to strengthen Dawkins' argument, van der Breggen argues that Dawkins' original argument is so logically fallacious that even Montague's argument cannot save it. Thomas Provenzola next discusses whether a belief must conform to Enlightenment evidentialist standards in order to be rational or justified. Provenzola rejects this notion—in a way reminiscent of Reformed epistemology—and argues instead that beliefs may be justified on the basis of a number of grounds, even if those grounds are not themselves infallible.

Returning to biblical studies, Steven Cowen next offers a novel defense of the inspiration of scripture using the resources of contemporary critical scholarship. Cowen demonstrates how one can use the generally accepted "authentic" sayings of Jesus to argue from Jesus' claims to deity (and God's confirmation of those claims in the resurrection) to Jesus' claims of scriptural inspiration. If Jesus—the very God incarnate—believed that scripture is inspired, then that provides strong evidence that the Bible is indeed inspired by God. Michael Licona likewise takes a Christological approach in his defense of Christianity against Islam. Licona demonstrates that the grounds Islamic scholars use to deny the death of Jesus are very weak and that, alternately, the evidence for the historicity of Jesus' death is overwhelming. But since Christianity affirms Jesus' death and Islam denies it, the fact of Jesus' death supports the truth of Christianity and refutes Islam.

Finally, Gene Carpenter offers an extensive table of Ancient Near Eastern texts and artifacts and discusses how these finds can be used to demonstrate both that the Bible authentically reflects its cultural milieu and that the Bible's message stands out from its culture as truly unique. Carpenter's piece is followed by some book reviews that you will want to check out as well.

Based on the contents of this issue, it seems that apologetics is truly alive and well after all. But more importantly, so is the One to whom our apologetics points.

Chad Meister and David Cramer

Revelation and Reason in Cross-Cultural Apologetics and Missiology

David J. Hesselgrave

"Just because he is *intelligens*, the Christian, of all men, has to discern with agonizing clarity what is conceivable by him about God himself." - Karl Barth[1]

It had been but a few short years since the end of World War II. Most Japanese young people—a young university student, Nobuko Higashi, among them—were still economically impoverished, physically malnourished and psychologically dispirited.

Pastor Nishi was most likely at home because his well-used bicycle stood in its usual place under the overhang of his house. A newcomer at the church, Nobuko Higashi was hesitant as he approached the front door but he managed a guarded "*Konnichi wa*" and waited. Acknowledging the greeting, the pastor's wife appeared almost immediately and, bowing low and repeatedly, welcomed the young visitor and showed him to a sparsely furnished adjoining room. Gazing down and away, Mr. Higashi resisted her invitation to recline on the colorful pillow Mrs. Nishi placed on the spotless *tatami* floor. He was still standing when Pastor Nishi entered the room. Adjusting his sash with one hand while extending the other in a downward gesture, the two of them assumed places on opposite sides of a low lacquerware table.

Recognizing that his young guest was extremely distraught and nervous, the pastor tried to reassure him by welcoming him both to his home and to his church. Nevertheless, Mr. Higashi sat with a faraway expression on his face seemingly unable either to come to grips with the reality of the situation or to explain the reason for his visit. The entire

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scenario seemed unreal to Pastor Nishi. He was not a stranger to odd encounters but had not experienced anything quite like this. Despite his quiet assurances, kindly questioning and continued urgings, the younger man sat stoically by, gazing downward and remaining eerily silent. Finally, feigning disgust, Pastor Nishi said,

> Young man, my wife and I are most happy to have you here in our home, but if you will not tell me what your problem is, I will pray for you and then we must part company. Perhaps you can return on another day when you are feeling better and I can try to help you then.

At that point Nobuko Higashi straightened somewhat and blurted out, "Sensei, that's it! Don't you see? That's exactly it! That's the problem! There is no 'I'! 'I' don't really exist! There is no 'I' to be helped!"

The young student's sudden outburst provided just the kind of opening Pastor Nishi needed. Discovering that his young friend was enrolled in a couple of first year courses in philosophy and religion at a nearby Buddhist university, the pastor insisted that *someone* was occupying space in his house, *someone* was taking his valuable time and *someone* had a very obvious problem. *Someone*, therefore, must exist. Who, indeed, if not a young man named Nobuko Higashi with whom he was speaking?

Beginning with a comparison of Descartes' method of doubt and Gautama Buddha's doctrine of nothingness, Pastor Nishi proceeded to set nothingness and non-ego firmly in the context of the traditional Hindu-Buddhistic worldview. Then he compared and contrasted both approaches and worldviews with biblical teaching concerning the Creator God, the creation and fall of humans, and the mission and message of Jesus Christ.

Both that particular discussion and Rev. Nishi's later recounting of it occurred well over a half-century ago. Regrettably, I do not know what became of either of the principals. However, the encounter itself served to challenge the limited understanding of mission that I and numerous missionary colleagues had taken to post-war Japan as part of our "missionary outfit." And it confirmed a number of important

discoveries. First, the post-war religious search of the Japanese people was not so much for the true God as it was for a way to recover their sense of self-identity. Second, the peace for which Japanese deeply yearned was not so much "peace with God" as it was "peace of mind" and a "peace among men." Third, though Japanese people had many questions concerning Christianity, some of the more puzzling of them were not so much spiritual as political and having to do with reasons why a "Christian nation" would drop an atomic bomb on the only city in Japan thought of as "Christian" (Nagasaki) or why it would carry on nuclear tests that had to do with war and suffering, not peace and well-being. But—and most important to my present thesis—it served to underscore the fact that *some kind of coherent and rational presentation could be expected to attend Christian conversion and discipling in Japan despite the prevailing Hindu-Buddhistic worldview and the rather widespread notion (among Westerners) that Japanese people tend to think "inside out, upside down, and backwards."*[2]

The Nature and Importance of Culture

German scholars introduced ethnographic considerations into mission studies during the last decades of the nineteenth century. But, despite the depth of their commitment and their capacity for self-sacrifice, the approach of Western missionaries to Japan and Asian cultures in general was often judged to be inordinately ethnocentric even when biblically and ethnographically informed. Later on, in the United States, cultural studies assumed increasing importance before and, especially, after World War II.[3] Nevertheless, only very slowly if at all did post-war American missionaries begin to understand the cultural thinking of the Japanese to a degree that occasioned a somewhat more contextualized approach to matters having to do with Christian conversion and discipleship.

The Meaning of Culture

"Culture" is not a biblical word. Anthropologists have offered literally scores of definitions, but one that seems to have had significant staying power was offered by Clyde Kluckhohn many years ago in a

smaller volume that has come to be accepted as an early classic on the subject. "Culture," he wrote, "is a way of thinking, feeling and acting. It is the group's knowledge stored up for future use."[4] I refer to this particular definition in this context for two reasons. First, because the very first definitional reference here is to the effect that culture represents a "way of thinking." Second, and more importantly, because Kluckhohn's study makes clear the now widely recognized understanding of culture as being a purely human product. Whatever else is to be said about culture in general or any given culture, there is no major culture in all the world or all of history that is really Christian. Nor, for that matter, is there any culture that is purely Satanic. Culture is a mirror both of and for man—fallen man to be sure but still bearing the *imago Dei.*

The Relationship between Christ and Culture

As is well known, after wrestling with theological questions having to do with the relationship between Christ and culture, H. Richard Niebuhr delineated five different positions as to the nature of that relationship: Christ *against* culture; Christ *of* culture; Christ *above* culture; Christ and culture in paradox; and, Christ as *Transformer* of culture.[5] Niebuhr seems to have thought of these positions as being more or less mutually exclusive and of the approach of the Gospel of John and the epistles of John, for example, as being essentially different in outlook. If, however, we think of culture as mirroring and representing man's way of thinking, feeling and doing—as the "stored up knowledge" of people—it is not difficult to see culture as being complex and cutting across these distinctions even as man himself is a complex creature and can be understood as being both "under Christ" though "against him," as being a "reflection" of Christ as well as a "refraction" of him. *By its very nature, culture is both a "God's kind" and also a "human being's kind" of phenomenon.*[6] But if that be true, we can anticipate that the "ways of thinking" of the various macro- and micro-cultures will exhibit the "right thinking" that emanates from the *imago Dei* but also the "wrong thinking "that emanates from the Fall.

East is East and West is West?

After becoming acquainted with Indian culture, Rudyard Kipling wrote his oft-quoted lines,

> East is East and West is West
> And never the twain shall meet.[7]

Numberless students of anthropology and religion have addressed this never-meeting of East and West and various of them have labored long and hard to explain Eastern ways of thinking to Western peoples and vice-versa.[8] Many of these findings have been insightful and helpful. I have summarized some of their more important findings elsewhere and will not attempt to do so here.[9] Nevertheless, in most of these cases the approaches have been binary and failed to deal with the "ever-meeting" of East and West evident in the trinary approach of Edmund Perry, F. H. Smith and E. R. Hughes.[10]

Perry, Smith and Hughes have collaborated to delineate not two but three distinct ways of thinking germane to this discussion—those of India and China in the East on the one hand, and that of the West on the other. At first blush their trisystemic approach may seem to complicate further an already complicated picture of cognitive processes. But not so. They have greatly aided our understanding because, in their view, the differences between Eastern and Western thinking is as much (or more) a matter of priority as it is a matter of kind. People of all three cultures assign differing priorities to the three ways of thinking, but all do think in all three ways.

1) *The "conceptual/postulational thinking" of the Western world.* Western thinking is predominantly conceptual—linear, defining, categorizing, analyzing, relating separate parts to the whole. It is, as a matter of fact, the kind of thinking that is characteristic of this paper and, indeed, of most theological and philosophical inquiries. It is difficult for Westerns to imagine that the discovery and disclosure of truth can be undertaken seriously in any other way.

2) *The "concrete-relational/pictorial thinking" of China.* This kind of thinking is characteristically Chinese as evidenced in Chinese ideographic writing. Concrete-relational thinkers, such as the Chinese and most tribal peoples, tend to think and communicate in terms of

pictures, diagrams, anecdotes, symbols, objects, events and stories rather than in terms of general propositions and principles.

3) *The "psychical/intuitional thinking" of India.* According to classical Hinduism, there are basically two kinds of knowledge. The knowledge of mathematics, science and theology involves hypothesizing, analyzing and dogmatizing. It is secondary and relative. The knowledge of Brahma is immediate and attainable only by contemplation and mystical experience. It is an inner, higher and perfect knowing and is absolute. In this perfect knowing the "pure mind sees" the truth.

Now these three ways of thinking are culturally distinct and different, but in accord with what we have said about the *peoples* of various cultures being essentially the same, just so Western, Chinese and Indian peoples all think in all three ways. However, they differ in the priority they assign to the different modes of thinking. As Westerners, Americans (traditionally) give most importance to conceptual/postulational thinking; lesser importance to concrete relational/pictorial thinking and still lesser importance to psychical/ intuitional thinking. For Indians the priority is just the reverse: the Indian only "really knows" what he knows by virtue of experiencing "enlightenment." Chinese (and, I believe, most tribalists as well) give highest priority to concrete examples, pictures, stories and events, and least to "enlightenment experiences" as primary avenues to truth.[11]

It is to be acknowledged, of course, that the thinking of cultures change as do other aspects of culture. In fact, some scholars have observed that, currently, the East is becoming more "Western" in its thinking while the West itself is becoming more "Eastern." Nevertheless, though significant, these changes may prove to be more superficial than appearances would indicate. At any rate, *people of all cultures basically arrive at their "stored up knowledge" in various combinations of these three ways of thinking as Perry, Smith and Hughes suggest.* To the degree this is so, their proposal is especially helpful to Western Christian apologists and missionaries because we can anticipate that, as a result of the imago Dei, the employment of cogent, coherent and consistent reasoning will be both appropriate and effective in Eastern cultures. At the same time we can anticipate that due to our fallen nature, God-given rationality will be rather easily

transmuted into rationalism and irrationalism in both Eastern and Western cultures. Divine revelation will serve both to complement and complete, and to compensate and correct, ways of thinking and knowing in all cultures.

Revelation, Reason and Contextualization —the Japanese Case

Why is it that the percentage of Japanese who are Christian has been, and still remains, so unimaginably small after a century and a half of Protestant missions, and especially after the unprecedented evangelistic effort that followed World War II? Having been partner to the post-war missionary effort in Japan and an observer of evangelical missions for well over half a century, it is perhaps appropriate that I reflect on the Japan case and employ it as the basis for some observations on the evangelical missionary effort in general. Others have taken special notice of other modes of revelation especially germane to the Japanese case. (For example, Little demonstrates that, at various times and in certain circumstances, God reveals himself and his will through theophanies, miraculous events, dreams and visions, and so on.[12]) I will focus mainly on special revelation in Christ and Scripture and the "cognitive/postulational" way of thinking.

Authentic Christian contextualization is not primarily a matter of condescendingly catering to the desires and wants of a people given their cultural patterns and circumstances. It is rather a way of employing cultural forms to respond Christianly and meaningfully to their needs as defined by God and disclosed in their culture.

Japanese Culture and the Japanese Way of Thinking

One reason why Japanese culture is so complex and difficult for foreigners to understand is that the Japanese worldview is what may be called "multireligious"—a composite of various religious worldviews with a generous dash of secularism thrown into the mix. The Japanese worldview cannot really be called syncretistic because little synthesis has been achieved. In order to understand the worldview of Japan, one must study at least the main features of tribalism, polytheism,

Shintoism, Mahayana Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and also naturalism, secularism and scientism. At a practical level, one must be able to recognize which of these worldviews is most operative at any given juncture in the life of the nation, family or individual.

It follows that "Japanese thinking" is also multireligious and, often, secularist. Little wonder that Westerners especially have serious problems in Japan when it comes to understanding why their Japanese counterparts in business, education, politics and church make the decisions that they do; do not make the decisions that "simple logic" would dictate; and readily change a decision when it becomes uncomfortable for one reason or another. But that is part and parcel of living and working in Japanese culture.

The Propagation Methodology of Soka Gakkai Buddhism

At a time when Christian observers were inquiring as to the number of Christian "converts" who did not follow through and become members of Christian churches in Japan, missionaries on the scene were inquiring as to causes for the rapid growth of "new religions" and especially Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai Buddhism. In a few short years, the Soka Gakkai had rapidly become one of the most rapidly growing religions in the world and a third force in Japanese politics.

The Soka Gakkai is a lay organization started just prior to World War II by two disillusioned educators, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, who opposed the Imperial Rescript on Education and Japanese chauvinism. In post-war Japan, it provoked the most criticism and evoked the most envy at one and the same time. Missionaries often asked why it was that Soka Gakkai was so successful. Some took it upon themselves to research the matter. My own research focused mainly on its propagation methodology and brought a number of reasons to light.[13] Relative to our concerns here—revelation and reason—findings were unequivocal.

1) *The importance of religion.* Though originally organized as a secular "study society," following the conversion of its founders, Soka Gakkai quickly adopted all the doctrines and ministrations of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. Fundamental to Nichirenism is the notion that "true Buddhism" is based on Buddha's final teaching in a holy book, the Lotus Sutra (Japanese, *Hokekyo*). As is the case with Eastern

holy books generally, the Lotus Sutra is not thought of as "revelation" in the sense that we think of the Bible as the revealed Word of God. Nor is its genuineness and truth demonstrated by historical and textual studies but rather by experiential evidence: repetition of the Sacred Title "Hail Glorious Sutra of conceivable kind." Nevertheless, it is revelatory, and therefore "true."

2) *A "contradiction" in Western philosophy.* The Soka Gakkai appeal to religious truth is accompanied by an appeal to philosophical validity. Makiguchi claimed to have discovered a contradiction in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Kant did not recognize that, in the triumvirate of truth, good and beauty, truth is objective and unchanging and not directly related to happiness. Good and beauty, on the other hand, are subjective and relative values and directly related to happiness. They can be "created" (Soka Gakkai means "Value-creation Society") and Makiguchi, Toda and their successors adduced all sorts of *reasons* designed to *prove* the validity of that claim. The fact that their argumentation would not be convincing to many logicians East or West is important but not decidedly so. What is germane here is the fact that it proved convincing to millions of Japanese in the 1950s and 60s.

Relevant Factors in the History of Protestantism in Japan

There is evidence that Christianity entered Japan very early, perhaps as early as the seventh century.[14] Protestant missions, churches and schools are relatively late, dating to the last half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, they share a history that literally bristles with lessons for contemporary missions generally and for evangelicals in particular. Already toward the end of the 19th century Protestantism in Japan was plagued by three related but distinguishable and important challenges: theological liberalism, social activism, and Japanese nationalism. Theological liberalism is most relevant to our present discussion, and it is ironic that it emanated from the nations that had sent a pure gospel and therefore constituted a special threat to orthodoxy when embraced by nationals. Congregationalist missionaries, for example, attempted to maintain control of one organization in order to ensure that "the money intrusted [*sic*] to its care be used for propagating the fundamental truths of the Gospel."[15]

1) *The Higher Critical approach to biblical studies from Germany.* Christian school of various kinds, but especially Christian universities, became hotbeds of Higher Criticism in the late 1880s and the 1890s. This was so especially after W. Spinner of the new German Evangelical mission opened a new school in Tokyo which promulgated the Higher Critical approach to Scripture. In Kyoto, though founded by the respected evangelical J. Niishima, Doshisha University succumbed to both this form of theological liberalism and to Shinto nationalism as well.

2) *Unitarianism and universalism.* About the same time toward the end of the 19th century, an American missionary, A. M. Knapp, joined the faculty of Keio University in Tokyo. He used his prestigious position as a launching pad to introduce Unitarianism and universalism to Japan.

Of course, this is but the tip of the iceberg. There is more—much more. The point is that the authority of Scripture was so undermined and sub-orthodoxy so prevalent in Protestant communions in Japan that they largely capitulated to the demands as the Shinto militarists assumed control in the first half of the twentieth century. The point is that the fortunes of evangelicals in Japan after World War II can only be understood in the light of both the defeat of the Japanese nation and the defection of the Japanese church. Defection of its Christian churches and schools meant that post-war Japan was largely—certainly not entirely—bereft of the kind of national leadership so sorely needed in those years of unprecedented opportunity. The defeat and occupation of the nation resulted in giving missionaries unprecedented freedom to preach the Gospel, which they did with great ardor. Among things that were lacking in that effort was a sufficient awareness of the liberalism that had long since undermined the authority of Sacred Scripture and the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith in Japan.

It is also important to understand that, while the gospel was being preached nationwide by national pastors and evangelists as well as foreign missionaries (and numerous pastors and evangelists visiting from abroad as well), that gospel was often obscured or even undermined by the sub-orthodox teaching/preaching of others. Japan not only had her own rather generous supply of liberal and neo-orthodox pastors and scholars, but was also visited by prominent theologians-

philosophers including Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Nels Ferre, and Charles Hartshorne among others. Confusion as to both the veracity and meaning of the gospel was often the result.

I have come to believe that the post-war evangelical effort in Japan did not suffer so much for lack of sincere proclamation of a "simple gospel" as for the relative dearth of a full-orbed gospel and solid reasons for believing it.

Missiology and Apologetics— "Renewing our Vows"

It is not unusual these days for married couples to celebrate a wedding anniversary by renewing their vows. After my experiences in Japan and a half century of subsequent involvement in evangelical missions worldwide I suggest that evangelical apologists and missionaries "renew their vows." In the early centuries of the Christian era, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine and many other apologists were also missionaries. Missionaries such as Gregory the Illuminator, Ulfilas and Raymon Lull were also apologists. Currently, missionary efforts to evangelize the world stand in need of the contributions of evangelical theologians and philosophers. Of course, the converse is also true. Apologists and theologians stand to benefit from the contributions of evangelical anthropologists and cross-culturalists. But in this context I am most concerned about the former proposition.

The Role of Reason in Christian Discourse: Ronald H. Nash's Presuppositionalism

Ronald Nash speaks of a pervasive spirit of *misology* (i.e., the hatred of logic) in contemporary religious thought and the importance of confronting it.[16] If *misology* is a problem in theology and philosophy, rest assured that it is an even greater problem in *missiology* and missions. But to disparage reason is to diminish God. Buddhists in general have done that when they have made various types of paradoxes out to be prods to enlightenment. But, as we have seen, Soka Gakkai

Buddhists made converts when they resorted to cogency rather than *koans* in their propagation methodology. I believe that Nash is right and that, in one way or another, all cultures reflect the *imago Dei* in their cultural thinking. Reason is not antithetic to the truth of revelation but supportive of it because the God of creation is the author of both.

1) *Correspondence with reality as a test of truth is rooted in the divine nature.* Correspondence with the "really real" is not just an abstract principle, it is a reflection of the very nature of the Creator God who "cannot lie," (Titus 1:2), of the God for whom it is "impossible to lie" (Hebrews 6:19).

2) *Noncontradiction as a test of truth is rooted in the divine nature.* Similarly, the idea that A cannot be non-A in the same sense and at the same time is not just an abstract principle, it is a reflection of the Creator God who is "faith-full" and "cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

3) *Convergence of the Written Word and the Living Word as a test of truth.* Divine truth or "True Truth" can be stated propositionally, but it can never be propositional *only* because Christ the Son of God is Truth personified (Romans 3:4; John 14:6). The Written Word of God (Scripture) and the Living Word of God (Christ) testify to each other; are in accord with the "really real" and "true truth"; and together constitute the highest forms of God's revelation to humankind.[17]

Testing the Truth of Missiological Proposals: Harold Netland's Critique of Fideistic Subjectivism

Whether intended or not, and recognized as fideism or not, the elevation of subjective personal faith over the objective propositional faith "once for all delivered to the saints" is rampant in much of evangelical mission theory and practice. This is a subtle thing and sometimes only philosophically astute scholarship will recognize it and call it by its true name. As an example, I cite Harold A. Netland's criticism of Lesslie Newbigin's fideism. The well-published British churchman and missionary to India, Lesslie Newbigin, propounds a contextualized approach to postmodern culture in general and Hindu-Buddhistic peoples that has had wide appeal. He grounds his approach in the character of God and God's purposes and actions as put forth in Scripture. His larger contributions have earned the general approval of

evangelicals including the philosopher of religion, Harold A. Netland. But, while expressing appreciation for Newbigin's work, Netland points to a critical flaw in Newbigin's thinking that has escaped the notice of numerous students of mission.

Given his own view that there must be some criteria of truth that are not context-dependent or relative to worldviews, Netland finds it necessary to take issue with Newbigin's fideistic idea that ". . . there is no platform from which one can claim to have an 'objective' view which supercedes all the 'subjective' faith-commitments of the world's faiths . . . ."[18] Netland elaborates his objection by noting that the Zen Buddhist claims ultimacy for *satori,* the direct, unmediated apprehension of ultimate reality, and the Hindu appeals to *para vidya,* the allegedly self-certifying highest form of knowledge and truth. Then he goes on to say that if, as in Newbigin's view, a Christian does no more than claim priority for God's self-revelation in Jesus, then that Christian forfeits the right to reject other faiths as false and in the process opens himself/herself up to the charge of self-refutation. To put it in Netland's own words, "The mere thesis of fideism appeals to rationality norms, such as the principle of non-contradiction, which logically cannot be merely faith postulates."[19] The implications of this truth for missions and missiology are enormous.

Communicating a Complete Gospel: Norman L Geisler's "Essentials of the Christian Faith"

The Achilles' heel of much of contemporary evangelism at home and abroad is the popular appeal of a "simple gospel." Assent to a "simple gospel" is deemed sufficient for the salvation of the unsaved. Affirmation of a "simple gospel" is deemed adequate for fellowship and cooperation. Advocacy of a "simple gospel" is deemed to be all that is necessary for growing a church. Understood rightly, there is some truth to this. But it is also indicative of a serious anemia in evangelicalism worldwide. Happily, an effective antidote is provided by the philosopher and apologist, Norman L. Geisler. Geisler distinguishes faith essentials in a way that is at once uncomplicated and instructive. He differentiates soteriological, epistemological and hermeneutical fundamentals and then explains and supports them in his characteristically no-nonsense fashion.[20]

1) *Soteriological essentials and a critical distinction.* Geisler has compiled a list of fourteen doctrines that are necessary for salvation from the penalty of past sins (justification), the present power of sin (sanctification), and the presence of sin in the future (glorification).[21] However, he makes a clear distinction between those essential that *make salvation possible* and those that do not explicitly have to be believed in order for a person *to be saved.*

2) *The epistemological essential: an inspired and inerrant Bible.* Geisler also makes it clear that belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is not necessary for salvation. People were saved before there was a Bible. Neither is belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible a test of evangelical authenticity. Rather, it is a test of evangelical consistency. If the Bible is indeed the Word *of God* it follows that the autographs of the Bible were without error. Geisler quotes John Calvin to the effect that "Our faith in doctrine is not established until we have a perfect conviction that God is the author [of Scripture]."[22] These are epistemological issues that have to do with *how* we know what we know about God and his salvation.

3) *The hermeneutical essential: a literal, historical-grammatical interpretation of the biblical text.* Finally, Geisler holds literal, historical-grammatical interpretation to be a presupposition of this kind of entire discussion. Apart from it, Bible readers and teachers can make the Bible mean what they want it to mean. Apart from it, cultists twist the Bible so as to make it say what they want it to say. Apart from it, there is no orthodoxy. Apart from it, the Protestant principle *sola Scriptura* is of little or no account.

The Kind of Contextualization that is Critical to Church and Mission: Paul G. Hiebert's "Local Church as a Hermeneutical Community"

One of the most significant of the late Paul Hiebert's many contributions to theological/missiological thinking has to do with his notion of the local church and its
functioning as a hermeneutical community. His proposal was first published in *Missiology*,[23] but that article has been reprinted in several publications. It has three major components.

1) *The philosophy of "critical realism."* Hiebert first provides a well-reasoned approach to the relationship between signs and reality and between form and meaning apart from which contextualizations are almost certain to be either slavishly sterile or hopelessly subjective.[24]

2) *"Critical contextualization."* All contextualizations are not "equal." In the final analysis, it is interpretation, articulation and application of Scripture in the local cultural context that holds the greatest potential for being meaningful and effective.

3) *Contextualization as a function of the local church.* Hiebert proposes that missionaries and national pastors cooperate in ministering to both church and community by examining the beliefs and behaviors of local culture in light of the Word of God and then by assisting the congregation in the determination of Scripture-based verbal and behavioral forms applicable to the local culture.

Hiebert's idea of the church as a hermeneutical community has great merit, but it needs to be informed by John Leith's observation of the critical roles of the universal church and orthodox doctrine in Bible interpretation. A noncreedal, nontheological, nonhistorical Christianity has never endured even when it has been attempted. Both doctrinal and practical considerations need to be grounded not only in the text of Scripture but also in the text as interpreted by the Church Fathers and their successors and as displayed in the confessions of Early Church councils and subsequent deliberative bodies.[25]

Conclusion

Focusing on revelation and reason, and building on the post-war effort of evangelical missions in Japan, I have argued that evangelical missions would benefit from a more intentional and closer synergistic effort on the part of Christian mission theorists and practitioners on the one side and Christian philosophers and apologists on the other.

Excursus

The writer of Hebrews—whether the apostle Paul or, more likely, Barnabas or Apollos—was a well known intelligent man who possessed a mastery of the Greek language and a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament. He wrote to professing Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman world who were either tempted to revert to Judaism or to "Judaize" the gospel. He attempted to inform them concerning the true gospel and convince them to either remain or become Christians.[26] At least three aspects of the discipling or maturation process are involved.

1) *Revelation in Christ and Holy Scripture.* With his audience in mind, the writer of Hebrews makes use of the Septuagint translation. In so doing he makes it clear that he has complete confidence in the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God. Of course, the New Testament itself was still in process of being written and authenticated, but the author also has complete confidence that both the words he is writing and the Christ he is portraying are completely and uniquely revelations of the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Heb. 1:1-2).

2) *Elemental or core teachings of the Gospel.* The writer refers to such things as repentance from dead works, faith toward God, "washings" and so on as being the "*stoicheia* (elements, rudiments) of the *arche* (beginnings, origins) of the *logion* (oracles, revelations) of God" (Heb. 5:12). He says nothing to detract from these doctrines. They are essential. They are basic. It is absolutely necessary that they be understood and believed. But, that is not the end of the matter.

3) *"Complete" doctrines for mature Christians.* Once the elementary teachings are understood and acted on, believers should go on to *teleiotes* (completeness, perfectness)—the doctrines that make for Christian maturity (Heb. 6:1-3). In the case of these particular Christians, these doctrines were of two types. First, they had to do with the Christian faith as it needs to be understood and believed—the "new covenant" in Christ, Christ as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek," Christ as Redeemer and Savior (chapters 7-10). Second, they had to do with faith as it is to be exercised and lived out—the faith of Abraham and a "cloud of witnesses," of Christ as Founder and Perfecter of the faith, of an unshakeable kingdom, and of brotherly kindness and Christian duties (chapters 11-13).

Notes

1. Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1960), 20-21. Quoted in John Leith, ed. *Creeds f the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday 1963), 1.
2. Of course, that evaluation cuts two ways. Japanese can be expected to think similarly of Westerners though they would be less likely to say so!
3. See, e.g., Kenneth L. Pike, "Emic and Etic Standpoints of the Description of Behavior," in Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior, part 1*, preliminary ed. (Glendale, CA.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1954), 8-28.
4. Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man* (New York: Whittlesey, 1949), 23.
5. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1956).
6. In part this may account for the tension between Charles Kraft's view of culture and that of Donald McGavran—a disagreement that underlies Donald A. McGavran's *The Clash Between Christianity and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Canon, 1972).
7. Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West," in Rudyard Kipling's *Verse: Inclusive Edition 1885-1918* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday 1924), 268-72.
8. See, e.g., the writings of S. L. Gulick, F. S. S. Northrop, and Hajime Nakamura.
9. See David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1991), 289-342, esp. 297-304.

10. See Edmund Perry, *The Gospel in Dispute* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), 99-106.
11. See diagram, "Three Basic Cognitive Approaches to Reality," in David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 303.
12. See Christopher R. Little, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized: An Evangelical Appraisal and Missiological Contribution to the Debate* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey). 2000. Concerning nature and natural revelation among the Japanese, see Hoyt Wayne Lovelace, "Toward a Contextualized Understanding of Conversion for the People of Japan: An Evaluation of the Effects of Worldview and Epistemology on Salvific Faith and Repentance," doctoral dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, December 2008.
13. See David J. Hesselgrave, ed. *Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements Around the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 132-35.
14. See John. M. L. Young, *By Foot to China* (Tokyo: Radiopress, 1984),19.
15. Charles W. Iglehart, *A Century of Protestant Christianiyin Japan* (Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles Tuttle, 1959), 96.
16. Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man: The Crisis of Revealed Truth in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 91ff.
17. See David J. Hesselgrave, "Reasoning Faith and Global Missions: On Reaching Hindus and Hindu-Like Peoples," in Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister, eds., *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 392.
18. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 190; quoted in Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 181.
19. Ibid., 182.
20. Norman L. Geisler, "The Essentials of the Christian Faith," in Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister, *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 99-100.
21. Ibid. 96-97.
22. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (London: James Clarke, 1953), 1.7.4. quoted in Geisler, ibid., 109.
23. Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization" *Missiology* 10 (July 1987): 287-96.
24. See Paul G. Hiebert, "Form and Meaning in the Contextualization of the Gospel" in Dean S. Gilliland, ed. *The Word Among Us* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 101-120.
25. John Leith, ed. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Co., Inc., 1963), 1-11 et passim.
26. See "Hebrew Introduction" in Kenneth L. Barker, gen. ed. *The Zondervan Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2006), 2050-51.

Understanding "If Anyone Says to This Mountain..." (Mark 11:20-25) in Its Religio-Historical Context

Kirk R. MacGregor

Mark 11:20-25 stands among those texts most misunderstood by Christians in general and most exploited by New Religious Movements in particular, perhaps most notoriously by the Word-Faith Movement. The passage is best known for its promise that "if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (v. 23). Traditionally most Christians have taken this text to mean that if they ask for something in prayer and harbor no doubts, then God will necessarily grant their request. Not only does such a reading contravene divine freedom, but it also inverts the divine-human relationship by turning God into the servant of humanity rather than the sovereign over humanity. However, presupposing the truth of this misreading, the Faith Movement proceeds to retranslate *echete pistin theou* as "have the faith of God" or "have the God-kind of faith" and places a quasi-magical emphasis upon the function of speech. Consequently, Faith leaders both historically and presently find warrant in this text for the metaphysical concept that words constitute unstoppable containers for the force of faith, enabling all who infuse their words with the God-kind of faith to "write their own ticket with God" and so have whatever they say. As Gloria Copeland explained the passage quite recently on the nationally televised *Believer's Voice of Victory*:

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> I can't think of anything that changed my life more after I was born again and filled with the Spirit than learning how to release faith, because this is the way you get anything – healing, money, the salvation of your children, the salvation of your husband or your wife – anything you're believing for, it takes faith . . . to cause heaven to go into action. . . . It says in Mark 11 . . . remember, now, the message was you can have what you say. You can have what you say. . . . Here's the Scripture. . . . For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those *things* which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he *saith*. I *say* – look at that, *say, say, saith, saith, say – I say* unto you, what things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and *you shall have them*. Man![1]

Appropriately, much attention has been paid by Christian scholars to showing that the text cannot substantiate its Faith exegesis. The standard response correctly points out that *echete pistin theou* is not a subjective genitive but an objective genitive, thereby depicting God as the object of faith and necessitating the translation "have faith in God." Less frequent but equally incisive is the observation that even if *echete pistin theou* were a subjective genitive, the lack of a definite article before *pistin* would connote "faithfulness" not "faith," thus precluding the translation "have the faith of God" and instead exhorting believers to "have God's faithfulness." While this negative task of showing what the text does not mean has proven successful, the positive task of explaining what precisely the text does mean should be judged insufficient at best. For the prevailing scholarly interpretation largely concurs with the *prima facie* reading of lay Christians but simply qualifies the alleged promise of receiving whatever one prays for by God's will, often via the proviso in 1 John 5:14-15 that "if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us . . . and we have what we have asked of him."

This interpretation is plagued by problems along three lines: pastoral, procedural, and hermeneutical. While the first two lines are comparatively minor and require only brief rejoinders, the hermeneutical

issues are critical and will occupy the bulk of this study. Pastorally, this interpretation has led some Christians to doubt the truth of God's Word when requests ostensibly consistent with the divine will fail to materialize. Procedurally, the prevailing view confuses the task of the systematic theologian (allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture in order to deduce valid doctrine) with the task of the exegete (grammatico-historically determining the meaning of the particular text intended by the original author and understood by the original recipients). It goes without saying that at the respective times when the pertinent statement was made and was recorded, Jesus and Mark could not have expected their audiences to draw upon an insight from an epistle not yet composed. But even more, given the Markan context and Johannine independence from the Synoptic tradition, it is far from obvious that Mark 11:20-25 and 1 John 5:14-15 are indeed discussing the same topic. Nor, it should be noted, is there any statement comparable to 1 John 5:14-15 from the Hebrew Bible that would have functioned as a limiter in the minds of the original hearers.

Hermeneutically, the prevailing reading grants the crucial presupposition of the identified misinterpreters that "this mountain" is a figurative expression for any obstacle because it fails to take into account both Jesus' first-century Jewish religio-historical context and the function of the pericope in the larger literary framework here utilized by Mark. This hermeneutical flaw, I will argue, is fatal and can only be positively remedied by a contextually grounded interpretation based upon precisely those historical and literary factors which the misreading overlooks. Turning to the historical Jesus research of N. T. Wright and the monograph on this passage by William R. Telford, it is precisely such an interpretation that this study endeavors to provide. In addition to exegetical accuracy, this interpretation will garnish the added pastoral benefits of upholding Scriptural reliability and the added procedural benefits of enhancing our apologetic against the pericope's abuses.

A Grammatical and Structural Analysis

Our investigation shall appropriately begin with a careful examination of the pericope's grammar and its larger function in Mark's Gospel. We note at the outset that Jesus does not say "if anyone says to a mountain" but "whoever says to this mountain (*tō orei toutō*)," literally "to *the* mountain – *this one*," where Mark uses both the definite article *tō* and the demonstrative pronoun *toutō*. Since either of these alone plus *orei* would indicate a specific mountain, Mark's striking combination of the definite article with the demonstrative pronoun serves to intensify the identification and so permits no doubt that one particular mountain is in view. While some commentators have, as a result, associated the mountain with the Mount of Olives, this identification depends upon the dubious assumption that Mark has redistricted the saying from a pre-Markan Olivet Discourse tradition to its present location. This hypothesis will not stand because, as E. J. Pryke has meticulously demonstrated, the characteristically Markan grammatical and syntactical features of both chapters 11 and 13 indicate that neither derives from a pre-Markan *Urtext*.[2] So what mountain are Jesus and Mark designating? In his cataloging of the Synoptic sayings of Jesus containing the term "mountain" (*oros*), N. T. Wright observes, "Though the existence of more than one saying in this group suggests that Jesus used to say this sort of thing quite frequently, 'this mountain,' spoken in Jerusalem, would naturally refer to the Temple mount."[3] Telford concurs, noting that in Jesus' day the Temple "was known to the Jewish people as 'the mountain of the house' or 'this mountain.'"[4] This high initial probability for a Temple referent is reinforced by the fact that Mark 11:20-25 concludes an intercalation or ABA "sandwich-like" structure where A begins, is interrupted by B, and then finishes. Such a stylistic device renders the frame A sections (the two "slices of bread") and the center B section (the "meat") as mutually interactive, portraying A and B as indispensable for the interpretation of one another.[5] The intercalation focuses on Jesus' controversial Temple actions precipitating his crucifixion and runs as follows:

> *A begins*: On the next day, after they had set out from Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Having seen a fig tree in leaf from a

distance, he came to see whether he might find something on it. But when he came to it, he found nothing except leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples were listening (Mk. 11:12-14).

B begins and ends: Then they came to Jerusalem, and having entered the Temple, Jesus began to drive out the ones selling and the ones buying in the Temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. He was not allowing anyone to carry things through the Temple, but he was teaching and saying to them, "Has it not been written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations?' But you yourselves have made it a den of robbers." The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and they were seeking how they might destroy him; for they were afraid of him, as all the crowd were amazed at his teaching. And when it became late, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city (Mk. 11:15-19).

A ends: And passing by early in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has been withered." Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, if anyone says to the mountain – this one – 'Be lifted up and be thrown into the sea,' and does not waver in his heart but believes that what he says is happening, it will be so for him. For this reason I say to you, everything which you pray and plead for, believe that you received it, and it will be so for you. And when you stand praying, forgive if you have something against someone, in order that your Father in the heavens may also forgive you your transgressions" (Mk. 11:20-25).[6]

This literary device inextricably links the Temple with Jesus' mountain saying, as Wright declares: "Someone speaking of 'this mountain' being cast into the sea, in the context of a dramatic action

of judgment in the Temple, would inevitably be heard to refer to Mount Zion."[7] Hence the intercalation verifies that "this mountain" indeed refers to the Temple mount. According to Telford, such usage harmonizes well with the meaning of the phrase "uprooter of mountains" in Rabbinic literature, where the phrase connoted either "a Rabbi with an exceptional dialectic skill . . . [who] was able to resolve by his wits and ingenuity extremely difficult hermeneutical problems within the Law" or someone who destroys the Temple.[8] An example of the latter is found in the Babylonian Talmud, in which Baba ben Buta advises Herod the Great to pull down the Temple and rebuild it. When Herod asks Baba ben Buta if such an action is licit in light of the *halakhah* that a synagogue should not be pulled down before another is built to take its place, Baba ben Buta replies: "If you like I can say that the rule does not apply to Royalty, since a king does not go back on his word. For so said Samuel: If Royalty says, I will uproot mountains, it will uproot them and not go back on its word."[9] Hence Herod can pull down the Temple mount immune from any charge of illegal procedure. Since the context of the Jesuanic statement is clearly not exegetical, Telford maintains that consistency with expected connotation demands that Mark 11:20-25 is a Temple statement: "The double entendre . . . in B.B.B.3b . . . is a suggestive parallel to our Markan passage, for there too Mark has employed the mountain-moving image in its capacity to suggest in its context the removal of the Temple mount."[10]

But what type of statement is directed at Mount Zion? In his magisterial commentary on Mark, Robert H. Gundry points out that this statement represents a curse analogous in meaning to Jesus' curse on the fig tree: "[B]eing lifted up and thrown into the sea makes the mountain-moving a destructive act. Its destructiveness makes the speaking to the mountain a curse, as much a curse as Jesus' speaking to the fig tree that no one should ever again eat fruit from it."[11] However, the passive verbs *arthētai* (be lifted up) and *blēthētai* (be thrown) indicate that the denouncer lacks the power to personally carry out the curse but is invoking someone else to execute it. As Gundry reveals, this fact explains Jesus' faith directive: "Because of the command to have faith in God, the passive voice in 'be lifted up and be thrown into the sea' means, 'May God lift you up and throw you into the sea' . . . The element of faith comes into this mountain-cursing because in

themselves the disciples . . . lack the power to speak a mountain into the sea."[12]

We already see a major dissimilarity between the Word-Faith reading and the true significance of this pericope: its central promise has nothing to do with blessings for the speaker but instead pertains to curses proclaimed against external things.

A Historical and Canonical Analysis

In order to understand the passage in its historical context, we must now inquire as to the nature of Jesus' actions in the Temple. Although understood by previous generations of commentators as simply a cleansing, a virtual consensus has surfaced among Third Quest historical Jesus researchers across the liberal-conservative theological spectrum that, regardless of whether or not cleansing comprised part of Jesus' agenda, the major thrust of Jesus' action was to enact a symbolic destruction of the Temple.[13] In the summation of Craig A. Evans, "[A]t the time of his action in the temple Jesus spoke of the temple's destruction . . . not simply . . . calling for modification of the sacrificial pragmata or, having failed to bring about such modification, for sacrifice outside of the auspices of the temple priesthood."[14] Foremost among the evidence supporting this conclusion is Jesus' intentional evocation and deliberate performance of Jeremiah 7-8, a trenchant condemnation of corruption within Jewish society and unmistakable warning that the Temple must be destroyed as a result:

> Thus says Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel . . . do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the Temple of Yahweh, the Temple of Yahweh, the Temple of Yahweh' . . . But here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are safe' – safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? But I have been watching, declares

> Yahweh. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. . . . Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that is called by my name, the Temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your fathers. I will thrust you from my presence, just as I thrust all of your brethren, the people of Ephraim. So you, neither pray on behalf of this people nor offer plea or petition on their behalf . . . for . . . my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place . . . it will burn and not be quenched. . . . But are the people ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all . . . at the time when I punish, they shall be overthrown, says Yahweh. When I wanted to gather them, says Yahweh, there are no grapes on the vine; there are no figs on the fig tree, and their leaves are withered (7:3-4, 8-12, 14-16, 20; 8:12-13).

Jeremiah's coincidence of the Temple condemnation with the portrayal of its worshipers as a fruitless fig tree overtly furnishes the meaning of Jesus seeking fruit on the barren fig tree, subsequently cursing it, and finally cursing "this mountain." As Wright elucidates,

> The cursing of the fig tree is part of his sorrowful Jeremianic demonstration that Israel, and the Temple, are under judgment. The word about the mountain being cast into the sea also belongs exactly here. . . . It is a very specific word of judgment: the Temple mountain is, figuratively speaking, to be taken up and cast into the sea.[15]

Viewing Jesus' actions against this prophetic backdrop, three features emerge as prominent:

(1) Jesus militates against the Temple not as the place where robbery occurs but as the den of robbers, namely, the robbers' lair where they return for safe haven after committing acts of robbery in the outside world. Moreover, both Mark's Greek word for "robbers" (*lēstēs*) and its Hebrew cognate *parisim* from Jeremiah refer not to "swindlers" but to "brigands" or "bandits" in the sense of "revolutionaries."[16] Barabbas, the leader of a murderous uprising in Jerusalem, was a *lēstēs*, as were

the two crucified alongside Jesus and scores of "holy rebels" described by Josephus.[17] Thus, economic impropriety is not in view here; in fact, no evidence exists from late antique Judaism of such exploitation transpiring in the Temple.[18] For the Temple required pure animals and birds for sacrifice, which were most safely purchased at a place near the sacrifice and where the priests could guarantee their suitability.

Moreover, the money changers were indispensable for turning all the many currencies offered into the single official coinage. Hence the text supplies no hint that anyone was committing financial or sacrificial misconduct.[19] Rather, as in the sixth century B.C. against the Babylonians, the Temple had become the talisman of nationalist violence housing those religio-political leaders who propagated a violent messianic scenario as the solution to the Roman problem. Since the Romans had made the Jewish people slaves in their own homeland and progressively enacted sanctions robbing them of their religious liberties bit by bit, the Sanhedrin, or "Men of the Great Assembly," popularized an interpretation of the Hebrew Bible concept of *mashiach*, or messiah, along the lines of previous national deliverers. Like Moses, this messiah would be a compelling religious leader, but even greater than Moses, he would successfully enforce Torah upon all who dwelt in Palestine. Like Cyrus, he would be king of an empire who conquered his enemies with the sword, but surpassing Cyrus' governance of a pagan empire, the Messiah would, after violently ridding the Holy Land of all Roman and other pagan influences, turn Israel into the superpower of the Ancient Near East, restore Israel's borders to at least their original expanse following Joshua's Conquest of Canaan (if not militarily extending these boundaries), and employ the new Israelite empire's political influence to spread Israelite justice and the Jewish way of life throughout the Mediterranean world.[20]

Such a messianic "job description" stood in diametric opposition to the type of Messiah Jesus claimed to be. By embracing the Sanhedrin's violent messianic aspirations, Jesus proposed that the Jewish people found themselves in a far deeper slavery than simply to Rome: they had voluntarily become slaves to the Kingdom of the World, the philosophical system of domination and oppression ruled by Satan according to which the world operates.[21] In Jesus' assessment, the Sanhedrin, backed by popular opinion, were chillingly attempting

to become the people of God by capitulating to the worldly kingdom, aiming to employ political zeal and military wrath to usher in God's great and final redemption and perpetuate it throughout the globe. But Jesus saw that any attempt to win the victory of God through the devices of Satan is to lose the battle.[22] For by trying to beat Rome at its own game, the Jewish religious aristocracy had unwittingly become "slaves" and even "sons" of the devil, "a murderer from the beginning," whose violent tendencies they longed to accomplish (Jn. 8:34-44) and who were blindly leading the people of Israel to certain destruction (Mt. 15:14; 23:15; Lk. 6:39). Hence the Sanhedrin comprised the "robbers" fomenting revolution in the synagogues, streets, and rabbinic schools who holed themselves up in the Temple. By uncritically accepting their program, Jesus contended that Israel had abandoned its original vocation to be the light of the world which would reach out with open arms to foreign nations and actively display to them God's love.[23]

(2) In the underlying prophetic text, Jeremiah chastised the Temple for the inextricable combination of social injustice and idolatry committed by its worshipers. So what comparable idolatry linked with Israel's false messianic hopes led Jesus to stage his Temple demonstration? Jesus held that implicit idolatry proved far more damning than explicit idolatry, since the second is just as easily avoidable as the first is alluring with its subtlety and façade of godliness. After all, from the darkened perspective of the world, what could make more sense than a politically conquering and dominating Messiah? It would be far easier for a professed monotheist to steer clear of falling down to worship idols than it would be to steer clear of the even more unholy alliance with the World's "might makes right" methods of oppression, abuse, and discrimination in hopes of effecting God's victory over the World.[24]

(3) We call attention to Jesus' distinctive phrase "pray and plead for" (*proseuchesthe kai aiteisthe*) in the promise "everything which you pray and plead for, believe that you received it, and it will be so for you." While *proseuchomai* and *aiteō* are common Koinē Greek verbs found regularly throughout the New Testament, their conjunction is *hapax legomena* and so cries out for an explanation. Stumbling at the clause, most translators have paraphrased *proseuchesthe kai aiteisthe* as "ask for in prayer," despite its lack of grammatical warrant and the fact

that either *proseuchesthe* or *aiteisthe* alone would carry the proposed meaning, thereby doing nothing to explain the conjunction.[25] Hence this paraphrase should be rejected as lacking both plausibility and explanatory power. But once Jesus' intentional evocation of Jeremiah 7-8 is disclosed, then the meaning of *proseuchesthe kai aiteisthe* comes into sharp focus. It immediately becomes apparent that Jesus is here employing metalepsis, or allusion "to an earlier text in a way that evokes resonances of the earlier text *beyond those explicitly cited*,"[26] with God's command to Jeremiah, "So you, neither pray (*titepalēl*) on behalf of this people nor offer plea or petition (*tiśā' . . . rināh ûtepilāh*) on their behalf" (7:16). For the second-person Hebrew verb *titepalēl* and the second-person Greek *proseuchesthe* are exact cognates meaning "to pray," and the Hebrew clause *tiśā' . . . rināh ûtepilāh* (to offer plea or petition) is the virtual definition of *aiteō*, namely, "to ask for with urgency, even to the point of demanding – 'to ask for, to demand, to plead for.'"[27] Putting himself in God's place, moreover, Jesus commands his disciples to act in consequence of his pronounced judgment ("For this reason I say to you . . .") in the same way that God commanded Jeremiah to act in consequence of his pronounced judgment ("So you . . .").

Thus we have established that Jesus is recalling Jeremiah 7:16 in such a way that he is expecting his hearers to take the next logical step. But if the Temple administration in the first century A.D. is functionally equivalent to its corrupt sixth-century B.C. predecessor, and if God ordered the faithful not to pray or plead in behalf of the predecessor, then in what sense can Jesus exhort the faithful to pray and plead concerning the existing administration? Well, if the faithful cannot pray and plead *for* the Temple regime, it follows logically that they can only pray and plead *against* the Temple regime if they are to offer petitions concerning it at all. Just as Jeremiah responded to God's exhortation not to intercede for the religio-political system of his day by declaring God's destructive verdict against it, so in its context "to pray and plead for" means "under God's Kingdom authorization, to pronounce a divine judgment of destruction upon." Again we emphasize that if Jesus had intended for this to be a general word about prayer or how to pray for blessings, he would have used either *proseuchesthe* or *aitesthe*, not both; their unparalleled joint usage strongly indicates

that a radically different theme is in play, an inference certified by Jesus' undisputed outworking of Jeremiah 7-8. Moreover, such fits perfectly with Jesus' "mountain-uprooting" exhortation to invoke God's judgment upon the Temple: the fate befalling the Temple will also befall all other systems of religiously legitimated sin. For these historical and intertextual reasons, the phrase "everything which you pray and plead for" means "every unjust system operating in the name of religion which you, as God's ambassadors, proclaim divine judgment upon" and cannot plausibly be interpreted as "everything you ask for in prayer," thus precluding the fallacious inference that we will receive whatever we ask with sufficient faith.

Positive Hermeneutical Solution: Piecing Together What the Text Actually Means

Armed with the necessary background, we are now in a position to spell out precisely what Jesus meant in Mark 11:20-25 by his carefully crafted synthesis of word and deed as well as the passage's contemporary significance. Following his symbolic destruction of the Temple and Peter's observation that the fig tree he "had cursed" (*katērasō*) had withered, Jesus was poised to explain his acted parable to his disciples. When faced with exploitative systems claiming religious support that oppress and persecute God's people and deceive those whom God desires to save, his followers must have faith in their all-just and all-powerful God to vindicate them by overthrowing these systems.[28] God's justice, as corroborated by Jesus' actions, ensures a divine verdict of condemnation against these systems, and God's power guarantees that the verdict will be fully executed at the Day of Yahweh if not before. Knowing the mind and power of God on this score, Jesus therefore gives his followers the right to pronounce a sentence of divine judgment against both the Temple (the mountain – this one) and all other *prima facie* religious but *de facto* worldly institutions (everything which you pray and plead for). Further, notice Jesus' indication that the judgment is currently taking place (what he

says *is happening*; *ginetai*, present tense) and actually has already happened (you *received* it; *elabete*, aorist tense).

Here an illustration from modern jurisprudence is instructive. When a judge pronounces an irrevocable sentence, such as life without the possibility of parole, by the authority of the legal system, we consider the sentence as accomplished as soon as it is spoken due to its inevitability, even though the sentence is not immediately carried out in its entirety. Similarly, as representatives of God, our verdict is currently being carried out and has in fact already been accomplished, since we are merely proclaiming an inevitable sentence previously reached in the divine court. Thus we find another example of the "now but not yet" motif that runs throughout the fabric of Jesus' Kingdom proclamation and the rest of the New Testament. While Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God with his first coming, it arrived only in part but in such a way as to guarantee its later coming in full; the final victory over evil has been won but not yet implemented. So we who live between Jesus' first and second comings experience our triumph over the worldly kingdom as here in principle, which will be completely actualized when Jesus gloriously returns.

However, Jesus makes three important caveats regarding his followers' vindication. All three concern essential attributes or, in Pauline terms, "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22) that one evinces if one belongs to the Kingdom of God. First, the speaker will be vindicated against the pertinent evil if "he does not waver in his heart," namely, if the speaker makes no attempt to have one foot in the Kingdom of God, so to speak, while having the other foot in the Kingdom of the World, of which the evil is a part. In that case, the speaker is a hypocrite guilty of the very crime he is denouncing and thus will certainly not be among the company of the redeemed.[29] Second, the speaker will be vindicated if he "believes what he says is happening" and that "he received it," which would naturally occur given the speaker's faith in an all-just and all-powerful God. However, if the speaker has faith in a different kind of god or no god at all, then such confidence will obviously not materialize, showing the speaker's separation from the true God. The third caveat, in addition to its admonitory function, simultaneously prohibits a possible misunderstanding of the Jeremiah subtext. A close reading of Jeremiah 7-8 reveals that God condemned the Temple leadership

as a collectivity (*hā'ām haōzeh*, "this people" singular not *'anāsîm ha'ēl*, "these persons" plural) – namely the institution or system they comprised – and not the concomitant individuals themselves; in fact, the subsequent chapters plead with those very individuals to repent and be saved. Hence Jesus' disciples may only announce judgment against unjust religious institutions or systems and never the individuals who belong to them, as the latter act militates against the *raison d'être* of the Kingdom of God – being the forgiveness-of-sins of people. Rather, believers must always forgive *tinos*, or "any individual," who has wronged them, even (and especially) as they denounce the worldly institutions which unsuspectingly enslave those forgiven persons. But condemning individuals to destruction is to cut off the branch of grace one is sitting on, thereby illustrating one's own spiritually lost state. In short, each of the three caveats is a different way of expressing the same point: "Only if you really are part of God's Kingdom will your announced vindication against the systems of evil be ultimately realized; otherwise, you'll unwittingly be found within the worldly kingdom and so face condemnation yourself."

In conclusion, far from promising that a person can possess whatever they pray for with sufficient faith, Mark 11:20-25 encourages believers to exhibit sufficient faith in God to stand up against religiously legitimated sin. Believers should expose such affairs resting secure in Jesus' promise that, if they resist compromise while maintaining lives of forgiveness, they will be vindicated against the wickedness on the Day of Yahweh. Instead of a stumbling block that incites doubt in biblical authority following unanswered prayer, the message of this text is both plausible in light of and consistent with the broad canonical panorama once understood contextually.[30] Examples of individuals who understood and embodied its message include the apostles before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29-32), Stephen (Acts 7:46-53), and Paul (Rom. 9:31-33), who remarkably knew the relevant pericope as part of the oral Jesus traditions that would later be enscripturated.[31] But, as we follow their example, we would do well to heed Paul's poignant abstract of and admonition from this passage: "If I have all the faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2).[32]

Notes

1. Gloria Copeland, *Believer's Voice of Victory*, 10 May 2007, emphasis hers.
2. E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel: A Study of Syntax and Vocabulary as Guides to Redaction in Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 19-21, 145-46, 167-68, 170-71.
3. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of Christian Origins and the Question of God (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1996), 422.
4. William R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree*, JSNTSup 1 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 119.
5. John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 62-63.
6. For the sake of analysis, I have directly translated all biblical passages in this article from the Greek (UBS 4th / Nestle-Aland 27th) and Hebrew (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*) primary texts in a woodenly literal fashion.
7. Wright, *Jesus*, 334-35.
8. Telford, *Barren Temple*, 110, 115, 118.
9. *Babylonian Talmud*, Baba Bathra 3b.
10. Telford, *Barren Temple*, 112.
11. Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 653.
12. Ibid.
13. For verification see John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 357; Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1984), 174, 384; E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 257-69; Jacob Neusner, "Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah's Explanation," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 287-90; Ben F. Meyer, *Christus Faber: The Master-Builder and the House of God* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992), 262-64; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989): 237-70; C. K. Barrett, "The House of Prayer and the Den of Thieves," in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. E. Earle Ellis and E. Grässer (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1975), 13-20; Wright, *Jesus*, 413-28; Richard J. Bauckham, "Jesus' Demonstration in the Temple," in *Law and Religion: Essays on the Place of the Law in Israel and Early Christianity*, ed. B. Lindars (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988), 72-89; Scot McKnight, "Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Jesus Studies," in *Jesus Under Fire*, gen. eds. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 65; Ben Witherington III, *New Testament History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 137.
14. Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and the 'Cave of Robbers': Toward a Jewish Context for the Temple Action." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993): 109-10.
15. Wright, *Jesus*, 422.

16. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:497-48; Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 473; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, rep. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 829.
17. Josephus, *War of the Jews*, 2.125, 228, 253-54; 4.504; *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14.159-60; 20.160-61, 67.
18. Wright, *Jesus*, 419-20.
19. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus*, 64.
20. Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), 269-70.
21. Jesus reinforces this point by thrice acknowledging Satan as the "*archē* of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), where *archē* semantically comes from the domain of politics and denotes the highest ruling authority in a given region. The followers of the Way would later echo the acknowledgment of their Master in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2; 6:12, 1 John 5:19, and Revelation 9:11; 11:15; 13:14; 18:23; 20:3, 8.
22. Wright, *Jesus*, 595.
23. Telford summarizes: "For Mark, it is *Jerusalem and its Temple* that have fallen under this curse. Their raison d'être has been removed. . . . An eschatological judgement has been pronounced upon the city and its exalted shrine. For Mark and his community, Jesus himself was the agent of that judgement. Had he not after all *cursed* the barren fig-tree? . . . '[T]he moving of mountains' expected . . . in the eschatological era . . . was now taking place. Indeed, about to be removed was *the* mountain *par excellence*, the Temple Mount" (*Barren Temple*, 231, 119; emphasis his).
24. MacGregor, *Systematic Theology*, 271-73.
25. A representative sample of instances where *proseuchomai* means "to ask for in prayer" includes Matthew 5:44; 6:5-6, 9; 24:20, Luke 6:28; 18:1; 22:40, Acts 8:24, and Rom. 8:26, and an analogous representative sample for *aiteō* includes Matthew 6:8; 7:7, Luke 11:9, 13, and John 14:13-14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24, 26.
26. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 2, emphasis his.
27. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:407.
28. Cf. Luke 18:7-8: "But will not God by all means bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I say to you, he will bring about their justice with speed."
29. Cf. Luke 16:13/Matthew 6:24: "No servant is able to serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and he will despise the other." Also note Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to me,

'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of the heavens, but only the one who does the will of my Father, the one in the heavens."

30. As review editor David Cramer pointed out, the usage by the Word-Faith Movement, then, seems to be an ironic example of "religiously legitimated sin," keeping the poor and oppressed in bondage to the false hopes of their "prosperity gospel."
31. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1041. Further, as Robert M. Grant illustrates ("The Coming of the Kingdom," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 [1948]: 301-2), our exegesis is consistent with the way Mark 11:20-25 was read by the Church Fathers, which cannot be said for the typical contemporary reading.
32. I.e., "If I have all the faith in God necessary to courageously and confidently proclaim God's judgment against the most powerful injustices masquerading in the name of religion but do not have love, I am nothing."

Dawkins' Logico-Philosophical Blunder:

A Reply to a Dawkins Apologist

Hendrik van der Breggen

Introduction

In "Dawkins' Infinite Regress," an article published in *Philosophy*, the journal of Britain's prestigious Royal Institute of Philosophy, philosopher Roger Montague describes Richard Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*,[1] as "brilliant and bruising," and Montague attempts to strengthen the book's crucial argument against God's existence.[2] The argument in question is Dawkins' infinite-regress argument, also known as Dawkins' who-designed-the-designer objection, an argument that is, as Montague correctly points out, not scientific but logico-philosophical.[3] In view of the immense popularity of Dawkins' book and now the philosophical legitimacy the book has been given in a high-ranking academic journal, it is appropriate that Dawkins' argument and especially Montague's attempt to strengthen it be given a serious apologetic reply.

In this paper I do the following. I review Dawkins' argument and Montague's attempt to strengthen it. Then I argue that Dawkins commits a multi-facetted logico-philosophical blunder, a blunder that renders Montague's work beside the point.

Dawkins' Argument

According to Dawkins' infinite-regress/who-designed-the-designer argument, appealing to an intelligent designer to explain

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nature's complexity (apparent design) is an explanatory failure. Why? Because it merely passes the explanatory buck. The intelligent designer hypothesis merely transfers the mystery of nature's complexity, which is the puzzle to be explained, to the mystery of the designer's complexity, which is a *new puzzle* to be explained, but this in turn generates *another puzzle*, that is, the mystery of the complexity of the designer's designer. And so on.[4]

More specifically, Dawkins argues that because the complexity of the natural world is highly improbable, and because the intelligent designer must be more complex than the complexity of the natural world that is being explained by the intelligent design hypothesis, it follows that the intelligent design hypothesis must be more improbable than the natural world.[5] But, Dawkins continues, this is to explain one improbability by another improbability greater than the first improbability.[6] What is worse (for the intelligent designer proponent), this also raises the question of the origin of the designer, thereby adding yet another layer of improbability to explain the additional complexity of the designer's designer.[7] But then this also raises the question of the complexity of the designer of the designer's designer, thereby adding *yet another layer of improbability*. And so on, *ad infinitum*.[8]

Because of this unending regress of additional improbabilities, Dawkins thinks that the God hypothesis is not a rational explanation for the apparent design found in nature. Indeed, Dawkins thinks that his argument renders God's existence extremely improbable: "God almost certainly does not exist."[9]

Montague's Attempt to Strengthen Dawkins' Argument

Montague comes to Dawkins' aid and argues that Dawkins' regress argument is stronger than Dawkins thinks. Montague reminds us that Dawkins' crucial premise is the claim that a designer must be more complex than the thing designed. And Montague adds that if this premise is true (that is, if it "holds"[10]), then Dawkins can go further than merely concluding that God is extremely improbable: indeed, Dawkins can say that he (Dawkins) "conditionally knows that God

can't exist—conditionally on establishing his premise about designers being more complex than whatever they design."[11] So, if the truth of the crucial premise can be established, then Dawkins has provided us with an infinite regress argument that shows us not merely that God almost certainly does not exist, but that God "couldn't and therefore wouldn't exist."[12]

To establish the premise that any conceivable designer must be more complex than the thing designed, Montague argues that we have good evidence of terrestrial cases of designers always being more complex than the things they design and, significantly, that no counterexamples are forthcoming. After all, it very much seems that more information is always needed to specify an object's designer than to specify the design of the object itself. Moreover, Montague argues, even if, as an answer to the infinite regress of designers, some "ingenious theist" were to conceive of a deity containing an "actual infinity of designers," then our theist "would be committed to the idea of a deity who is infinitely bureaucratic."[13] In other words (uttered undoubtedly with a chuckle), "[t]his deity would be like the greatest CEO conceivable, one who controls an infinite hierarchy of delegation."[14] But this, Montague asserts, is Dawkins' "Trojan Horse" (invited by the so-called "ingenious theist" into the camp of the intelligent designer proponents).[15] It surely renders the idea of God absurd.

So, given Dawkins' premise that a designer must be more complex than the thing designed—a premise (allegedly) made more reasonable to believe because of Montague's assistance—it is not the case that God is merely extremely improbable; rather, according to Montague, Dawkins should now know that God *cannot* exist. Because of Montague's help, then, Dawkins' infinite-regress/who-designed-the-designer argument continues to block the inference to a designer, but now more effectively than before.

Dawkins' Blunder—and Montague's Continuation of the Blunder

Let us return to Dawkins' infinite-regress/who-designed-the-designer argument. And let us concede Dawkins' premise (that

a designer must be more complex that any object it/he/she designs), and let us even concede Montague's defense of this premise. Does Dawkins' infinite-regress-of-designers argument block the inference to an intelligent designer (natural or otherwise) from the apparent design in objects?

We should think not.

Simply put, Dawkins' infinite-regress-of-designers objection is *not relevant* to the making of the design inference. That is to say, the question of the complexity and origin of a designer simply has *no bearing* on the issue of whether something is designed. Consider the science known as SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence). In SETI the intelligent design hypothesis is available and legitimate as an explanation of ET's communications (if they were to occur). Interestingly, even Dawkins would agree—but only because of what Dawkins calls ET's "provenance" (origin).[16] According to Dawkins, "Entities that are complex enough to be intelligent are products of an evolutionary process. No matter how god-like they may seem when we encounter them [e.g., via their messages], they didn't start that way."[17] But, we should notice, these claims are sheer assumption on Dawkins' part. Moreover, and more importantly, we should also notice that whether an alleged message is truly a message from ET depends not at all on our knowledge of ET's complexity or origin or provenance, but solely on whether the message displays a design that we can discern.

How do we discern design? Think about some long words in a *Scrabble* game, or consider some sophisticated computer software. Or think about some cave paintings and arrowheads found by an archaeologist. Or imagine, say, the discovery of strange complex machinery on Mars. Or recall the message from outer space in the movie *Contact*. The way to discern empirically that something is designed (or not) is to determine whether the thing satisfies two criteria: (1) that its existence or configuration is highly improbable via non-intelligent causes alone, given what we know from empirical experience of the capacities of non-intelligent causes; and (2) that it is strongly analogous to things we know (also) from empirical experience to be designed by intelligent causes. (Of course, we could be mistaken in our discernment, but this is the nature of empirical reasoning; mistaken or not, we should surely go in the direction that the evidence points us.[18])

Who designed the designer? Perhaps the designer just is (and always has been). Or not. Perhaps the designer is complex (more complex than what it has designed). Or not. The point here is this: we are not required to understand the nature of a designer (that is, whether it is complex or not) or even the origin of a designer (whether it has a designer or not) to determine, rationally and empirically, that something has been designed and, consequently, that a designer exists.

Therefore, as an alleged block or objection to discerning a designer from its designed effects, the infinite-regress/who-designed-the-designer argument is beside the point. *It is not relevant.* [19]

What is worse (for Dawkins), the infinite-regress/who-designed-the-designer argument is also based on a false implicit premise. The explicit premise (defended by Montague) that a designer must be more complex than the thing designed seems to be true (at least of terrestrial designers[20]). However, what is not true is the unspoken but assumed premise that the complexity of a designer makes a designer hypothesis improbable. What is neglected is the fact that the complexity and improbability of the apparently designed object in question *makes the designer hypothesis probable.* Surely, *that* is why the designer hypothesis is appealed to in the first place! Indeed, intelligent designer explanations are accepted in science even if the designer is complex—for example, in archeology (to explain cave paintings and arrowheads), in cryptography (to explain codes), and in forensic science (to explain "who dunnit"). In fact, in these sciences the designer is even *more complex* than the objects or phenomena explained, yet the designer hypothesis is scientifically legitimate. If we were to accept Dawkins' implicit premise, then—to be logically consistent—the aforementioned explanations would not be legitimate. But they *are* legitimate. Thus, it is false that the complexity of a designer makes a design hypothesis improbable.

At this juncture, Dawkins (and Montague) might point out that, yes, it is legitimate to explain various individual instances of organized complexity/apparent design by appeals to other organized complex things, such as terrestrial designers, if the inference is temporary; but it is *not* legitimate to make such an inference in a more general or ultimate way to a supernatural designer such as God. Why not? Because, Dawkins' assumption seems to be, ultimate causes must be

simple and non-intelligent, just as elementary particles are simple and non-intelligent.

In reply, it is reasonable to point out that this seems very much to grant a privileged philosophical status to an *assumed* metaphysics, namely, materialism. But, it should be emphasized, this metaphysical assumption is *at issue* if we are trying to discern whether evidence points to a supernatural intelligence or not. In other words, to privilege this assumption when it is at issue is to incur the fallacy of question-begging, the error in argument of assuming as proven that which is at issue.

Therefore, Dawkins' infinite regress/who-designed-the-designer argument is (to put it mildly) a multi-facetted logico-philosophical blunder. But this means that Montague's attempt to buttress Dawkins' crucial premise (that a designer must be more complex than any object it designs) amounts to an *exacerbation* of a logico-philosophical blunder. Montague's work, then, is basically beside the point, too. It's as if one were to tune-up an engine of an already sunken ship, unaware that the ship has sunk, yet think that doing the tune-up will keep the ship from sinking. In other words, Montague perpetuates the fallacy of irrelevance committed by Dawkins.

Conclusion

To recap, Dawkins' infinite-regress/who-designed-the-designer argument is seriously flawed: it involves question-begging, it relies on a false implicit premise, and, more importantly, it is simply irrelevant as an objection to the design inference. Moreover, Montague's attempt to strengthen Dawkins' argument is basically to perpetuate the irrelevancy. In other words, the argument that constitutes the philosophical foundation of *The God Delusion* is a multi-facetted logico-philosophical blunder and, even with Montague's help, continues to be so.

Contrary to what Dawkins and Montague think, there is no passing of the explanatory buck. Nature's apparent design remains, and continues to suggest an Intelligent Designer.[21]

Notes

1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006).
2. Roger Montague, "Dawkins' Infinite Regress," *Philosophy* 83:323 (January 2008): 113-115.
3. Montague, "Dawkins' Infinite Regress," 114.
4. Chapter 4 of *The God Delusion* contains this crucial argument.
5. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 113-114.
6. Ibid., 114.
7. Ibid., 120.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 113.
10. Montague, 'Dawkins' Infinite Regress,' 113.
11. Ibid., 115.
12. Ibid., 114.
13. Ibid., 115.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 73.
17. Ibid.
18. It should be noted that the satisfaction of the above criteria for determining design would constitute neither an argument from ignorance nor Dawkins' "Argument from Personal Incredulity" (Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 128). Rather, the argument would be an argument based on what we know.
19. In other words, Dawkins has committed a fallacy in informal logic, i.e., a violation of the relevancy criterion of a cogent argument. Two other necessary criteria of a cogent argument are the acceptability of the premises and the adequacy or sufficiency of the grounds of the relevant premises, if otherwise rationally acceptable. For more on the criteria of a good argument, see Trudy Govier's, *A Practical Study of Argument*, 6th edition (Belmont, California: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005).
20. Though some might argue that the complexity is true only of material beings, but not immaterial beings. On this, see Alvin Plantinga, "The Dawkins Confusion," http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/002/1.21.html [accessed February 29, 2008].
21. For further discussion of the concept of intelligent design and its discernment, see Hendrik van der Breggen, "Miracle Reports, Moral Philosophy, and Contemporary Science" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2004), pp. 214-226. See too Del Ratzsch, *Nature, Design, and Science: The Status of Design in Natural Science* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001) and William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions about Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004). Also, see Robert B. Stewart, ed., *Intelligent Design: William A. Dembski &*

Michael Ruse in Dialogue (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007) and William A. Dembski & Sean McDowell, *Understanding Intelligent Design: Everything You Need to Know in Plain Language* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2008). For helpful online discussions of Dawkins' arguments, see: William Lane Craig, "What do you think of Richard Dawkins' argument for atheism in *The God Delusion?*" http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5493 [accessed February 29, 2008] and (again) Alvin Plantinga, "The Dawkins Confusion," http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/002/1.21.html [accessed February 29, 2008].

Some Fallibilist Conceptions of Rationality: An Intuitive Approach

Thomas A. Provenzola

Proponents of Cartesian notions of the indubitability of beliefs, and the evidentialist corollary of proportioning one's beliefs to the evidence, argue that a belief is rational for a person only if that person has sufficient evidence, arguments, or reasons for that belief. Sufficient evidence under this conception of rationality typically follows a classical foundationalist system of justification which argues that the belief that p is rational if and only if p is (1) self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible, or else (2) inferable from a set of beliefs that are self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible. In order to be rational about one's beliefs, a person must be able to trace all of one's non-basic beliefs back to self-presenting basic beliefs that coerce, either rationally or probabilistically, one's non-basic beliefs. This approach to rationality carries with it profound implications for the possibility of rational belief, including theistic belief. It seems, after all, that the possibility of actually having a rational belief on this account is dismal, to say the least, if not neigh unto impossible. Most non-theistic evidentialists, for example, argue that theistic belief does not satisfy the criteria for rationality because it typically fails to supply the sufficient evidence required to maintain it.

Perhaps we can increase the prospects of rational belief, whether theistic or otherwise, by taking some initial steps to tame the ubiquitous demands of the principle of sufficient evidence so characteristic of modern conceptions of rationality. The purpose of this paper is to suggest that one can arrive at a model of rationality in which sufficient evidence for the rationality of a person's beliefs, including theistic

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belief, incorporates a reason-based conception of justification which *may* coincide with, but *need not*, a person's *attempts* to offer rationally convincing evidence that one's beliefs are true or certain. On another level, being rational about one's beliefs involves attempts to marshal enough of the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence so as to be so rationally convinced of the truth or certainty of a given belief that one can no longer maintain a reasonable doubt.[1]

It seems intuitively reasonable that if a person is considered rational in holding a belief, we would expect that person to hold it on the basis of sufficient evidence, that is, on the basis of good reasons, evidence or arguments. Sufficient evidence on this conception is evidence offered to show that one does have good reasons for one's beliefs, and that those reasons are not arbitrary. Furthermore, this sense of rationality maintains that it is not rational to hold a belief in the absence of sufficient evidence or on the basis of blind faith. But there is another sense in which to be rational about one's beliefs involves the process of *verification*, that is, attempts to marshal enough of the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence so as to be so rationally convinced of the truth or certainty of a given belief that one can no longer maintain a reasonable doubt. In this sense of the term, to be rational about one's beliefs, one is at least attempting to be *right* about one's belief. And while one can be rational without actually verifying a belief by marshaling the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence, or even *attempting* to verify one's beliefs as true (e.g., one can be rational simply by having goods reasons for one's beliefs), there is also a sense in which being rational about one's belief involves being in a position to verify one's beliefs as true on the basis of good arguments and evidence. In other words, there is a sense in which rationality involves a reason-based conception of justification which *may* coincide with, but need *not*, attempts to establish the truth or certainty of a proposition.

This approach to rationality recognizes that it is too high a standard to maintain that one is rational in holding a belief only when a person has in fact *verified* (i.e., marshaled the appropriate evidence) that belief as true or certain. One may be rational in holding a belief arising out of a reason-based conception of justification in which sufficient evidence can rest on other basic or non-basic beliefs, or it can rest on

mental or perceptual states for which a person believes he has good reasons to think are true, even if a person makes no attempt to verify his beliefs as true, or even if those beliefs, mental states, or perceptual states turn out to be false. So long as a person holds those beliefs for reasons he *thinks* are likely true (a seemingly intuitive minimal criterion for a reason), he is rational in holding them. This model of rationality further suggests that the more likely it is that others will challenge the truthfulness of a belief due to insufficient or underdetermined evidence, the more one is expected to provide evidence for that belief if one is to be rational in holding it, although that evidence need not be indubitable or involve conclusive arguments.[2] It also suggests that, given insufficient or underdetermined data, a person is more likely to be rational in holding such a belief more tentatively. So while our model of rationality allows room for the possibility that some of a person's beliefs may be provisional on evidence, it does not expect this possibility to be a governing criterion for the rationality of one's beliefs.

And finally, we will suggest that our model of rationality can follow a broadly foundationalist structure, while refraining from the stronger forms of foundationalism, which require that all non-basic beliefs must be inferred from a privileged set of self-justifying beliefs.[3]

Rationality and Certainty

Crucial to our model of rationality is the notion that a statement's truth is not the same thing as its certainty. The truth of any statement is a different matter from whether or not it can in fact be verified as true. On our model of rationality, we have been arguing that the Enlightenment idea of Cartesian certainty (i.e., one in which the evidence for a belief leads to the infallibility or indubitability of that belief) is far too rigorous a criterion to be workable. This would seem to suggest that a more workable model should lessen the requirement for what counts as sufficient evidence for justification and rationality. Part

of suggesting such a model relies on important distinctions between objective and subjective certainty.[4]

Stated briefly, objective certainty relates to the matter of truth and certainty, that is, whether a person has a right to say something is in fact verified.[5] Objective certainty has to do with the amount, kind, and quality of evidence that is marshaled for the truth of a proposition. Subjective certainty, on the other hand, has to do with the degree of persuasion or conviction a person has, that is, the degree of certitude one has about the truthfulness of a given proposition. Subjective certainty deals with the psychological factors a person brings to the matter of a proposition's truth. Of course, in our model of rationality, the goal is to have one's subjective certainty stem from objective certainty, that is, the degree to which a statement can be verified on evidence. But we face the problem that subjective certainty can come about from factors not related to the verification of a proposition. One may choose to be subjectively certain for all kinds of reasons not related to the quality and quantity of the evidence. One may, for example, go against what the evidence seems to suggest, or choose to be subjectively certain even when there is insufficient evidence for the belief in question.

When considering the matter of certainty and the rationality of one's belief, we are primarily concerned with the amount and kind of evidence available for the truth of a given proposition. This is what is meant by objective certainty. But to have an idea of what that evidence might look like, one must distinguish between different kinds of statements and the manner in which the available evidence argues for or against them. And it is here that we can glean from notions from the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein argued that some statements (e.g., "I have a mind") are beyond any question of doubt because they are so foundational that we cannot imagine the kind of evidence that could reasonably be marshaled against them.[6] This is what is said of analytic statements (e.g., statements of math and logic). Analytic statements (i.e., statements which assert that some relation among ideas exists, that, for example, 2+2=4) are true by definition. Such statements have 100 percent objective certainty. In other words, we are saying that there is no other kind of evidence that could be marshaled in favor of their certainty.

Other statements, however, can be doubted on a meaningful basis, although one may be in a position to marshal enough of the appropriate kind of evidence to be rationally convinced that it no longer makes sense to doubt them. This is the case with synthetic statements, that is, assertions of empirical matters of fact. The difference here is that a person can, at most, marshal 99 percent objective certainty for synthetic statements. It is always possible that some future evidence could count against one's belief, even though a person does not expect that to be the case. So when one is considering whether it is rational to hold a given synthetic statement, one is concerned with the extent to which one can marshal sufficient evidence (i.e., objective certainty) to conclude that a proposition of this sort has a 99 percent probability (or as close to it as possible) of being true.

Wittgenstein's notions on objective and subjective certainty are designed to show that doubting and proving are matters of objective certainty, while the conviction that something is true is a matter of subjective certainty. He argues that the *kind* of certainty is the kind of language-game (i.e., objective certainty).[7] The emphasis here is on the distinction between the *kind* of certainty and the *degree* of certainty. The point of this distinction is to show that one can achieve subjective certainty (i.e., the conviction that a statement is true) to the same degree in the language-game of religion, history, or science as in the language-game of mathematics and logic, but the kind of objective certainty upon which it is based will differ. In other words, the methods a person uses to verify the statements of math and logic (along with one's awareness of the kind of evidence appropriate to such statements) are different from those used in science or history, because the language-games are different. So when a person claims to have subjective certainty about a given synthetic statement (whether in science, philosophy, or religion), that claim is rational to the extent to which he is aware of the appropriate evidence for that belief, together with the extent to which his conviction that the belief is true is based on the kind and quality of evidence marshaled for that belief (i.e., its objective certainty).

It is important to note that if a person has 99 percent objective certainty of a synthetic statement, there is no sense in which he can be more objectively certain about it. So he is rational in being as

subjectively certain about that belief as he is about some analytic statement. But a further question for rationality has to do with cases in which we have less than 99 percent objective certainty relative to empirical matters of fact. What degree of subjective certainty is allowed in these cases if a cognizer is to remain rational in holding such beliefs? This is a more difficult matter to ascertain. If the way one goes about obtaining objective certainty in the language-games of religion, science, or history is different than the way one goes about getting objective certainty in math or logic, as Wittgenstein suggests, then the matter of how one knows whether there is appropriate evidence upon which to establish a statement's truth will differ according to the language-game in question.

In response to Wittgenstein, we may suggest that there are appropriate kinds of evidence and appropriate amounts of evidence when considering the objective certainty of specific synthetic statements. The appropriate *kind* of evidence is evidence relevant to the issue under discussion, evidence that is true, and evidence that is used properly when structuring one's argument. As to the appropriate *amount* of evidence, we may suggests that the evidence is sufficient when the evidence of the appropriate kind is so rationally convincing that it no longer makes sense to hold a reasonable doubt.[8] Of course, with synthetic statements, we will not always have enough evidence to make them rationally convincing. But for those instances in which enough objective certainty has been marshaled for the truth of a statement, it makes no sense to continue doubting until one thinks some *final explanation* has been reached. The reason for this is because a person may already have that explanation and simply not realize it, or he may have no idea of what that explanation might look like should it be offered. In the final analysis, we cannot determine in advance the specific amount of argumentation or evidence that is required for a person to know whether there is an appropriate amount of evidence to establish a statement's truth.[9]

On our model of rationality, then, it seems reasonable to suggest that a person is rational in holding one's beliefs when one retains the degree of rational conviction that is warranted by the objective certainty (i.e., the appropriate kinds, quality, and amounts of evidence). This will have much to do with the quality of the evidence or arguments. This is

easier to accomplish in the language-games of math and logic, since the kinds of procedures one uses to determine an analytic statement's truth involve rational proofs and the possibility of uncovering contradictions in arguments. So one may be in a better position to offer evidence for the objective certainty of analytic statements (and consequently have a right to a greater degree of subjective certainty about them) than for the synthetic propositions of theism. But this does not rule out the possibility of one being equally subjectively certain about the statements of theism, or at least having a degree of subjective certainty that is consistent with the evidence.

Furthermore, while our model of rationality can accept certain aspects about the distinctions between objective and subjective certainty, we are not forced to conclude with Wittgenstein that the language-game of theism does not deal with factual claims that are open to being verified or falsified on evidence.[10] One does present evidence for the synthetic claims of theism; they are in fact synthetic and in need of inductive procedures for verification, but they are, nonetheless, assertions like those of science, history, and philosophy. As Wittgenstein asserts, once a certain degree of evidence is produced, it is difficult to imagine how we can hold a reasonable doubt with respect to the statement's truth. In other words, it makes little rational sense to question whether objective certainty warrants subjective certainty, and that is true whether we are considering statements of history, science, mathematics, or religion.[11] If one can marshal 99 percent objective certainty for a synthetic statement's truth, one is warranted in having complete subjective certainty of the statement's *truth*, even though it is synthetic. But we cannot be as dogmatic about such statements where the objective certainty is not as strong. Still it is important to point out that a statement's truth does not depend on either subjective or objective certainty. Rather, a statement's truth is a matter of whether it satisfies certain conditions and referents in the world. And we simply may not be in a position to verify a statement as true.

The above distinctions help to clarify the matter of what kind of evidence is sufficient if one is to be rational about one's beliefs. Furthermore, a good deal of our synthetic statements will be based on less conclusive evidence, and there still may be legitimate room for doubt and explanation. Nevertheless, although the evidence for one's

belief may be public, a given person's investigation of it may be wrong or just underdetermine the issue. And while this is certainly possible, it can be held in check when we do our investigating and theorizing (whether theistic, scientific, or otherwise) in community. That is, if the public evidence is conclusive in one direction, then its probability of falsehood is not high, and doubting, proof and explanation must end at some point.[12]

Rationality and Justification

What, then, is the relationship between rationality and justification? It is difficult to deny the cognitively intuitive sense that we regularly hold true beliefs while also holding those beliefs in the absence of adequate reasons and reliable processes. If I only feel a hunch that my friend is holding four aces in his hand, my belief, while it may turn out to be true, is not based on good reasons or evidence. In contrast, my friend, because he can see the cards in his hands, has more than likely appealed to the best evidence that his cognitive equipment has to offer for saying that he is holding four aces. We would say that he has *perceptual grounds* for his belief. So while both beliefs are true, only my friend has appealed to reasons consistent with objective certainty.[13]

This suggests that we perhaps need a rational model that illustrates more intuitively the exact nature of justification and its relation to verification. *Epistemic justification* is the cognitive procedure of offering acceptable *reason-giving* answers in support of our beliefs and claims to knowledge. On our model of rationality, justification involves the reasons, evidence, or arguments (i.e., the objective certainty to which one appeals) for holding a given belief. Where possible, it *may* involve attempts to verify one's beliefs as true with good arguments and appropriate evidence. But it does not necessarily *demand* that a person verify a belief as true, or even *attempt* to verify a belief as true. And this points to a significant distinction in our proposed model of rationality. There are two different senses in which a person can be rational in holding a belief. In the first place, as earlier indicated, there is a sense in which rationality is tied to the stronger notions of truth

and certainty. In this sense of rationality, one is rational in holding a belief in virtue of the fact that one has verified one's belief as true by appealing to the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence for the belief in question. In such a case, it no longer makes sense to say that one's belief does not satisfy the conditions of being rational. One can do no better than to verify one's belief as true on the evidence.

But there is another sense in which rationality relates to the matter of justification, and this sense of rationality is not identical to the first. It is clear that we are not always in a position to verify a belief as true, but we are typically in a position to offer reasons for why we think our beliefs are true. In doing so, we are dealing with a sense of rationality in which one is rational for holding a belief that, while not *verified* as true (a matter of objective certainty), one is at least *attempting* to offer a reason-based conception for why he thinks it is true. In making this distinction, it is important to recognize that a rational (or justified) belief is not necessarily the same thing as knowledge. The reason for this is because, on our model of rationality, justification can lead to knowledge only if a person has in fact verified a belief as true by marshaling enough of the appropriate kind of evidence for it. But a person's *approach* to epistemic justification is a different thing from one's *ability* to verify a given belief. And further, one's approach to justification does not necessarily determine one's theory of truth. So, given our notion of objective certainty, if a person's verification of a belief provides good reasons for believing it, then such a person has adequate justification for claiming that one's belief is knowledge.

While we may agree that hunches, guesses, conjectures, and wishful thinking do not yield cases of knowledge even if they are true, there is still the matter of what *reasons* a person must have for a belief if she is thought to be rationally justified in holding that belief. On our model of rationality, we have been arguing that one can be rational in believing a proposition without verifying it or attempting to verify it. Of course, one can be rational in holding a belief in which one's reason-based conception of justification coincides with attempts to verify one's belief as true or certain in light of the appropriate available evidence, but this is not necessary for justification. What this means is that one can be justified in holding a belief that he has not in fact verified, that is, verified in terms of offering public, unbiased rational

or empirical evidence. Furthermore, it does not mean that any reason offered for a belief must be irrefutable if that belief is to be justified. It is difficult to argue against the simple thesis that a person may be rationally justified in believing *x* at time *t* given a background set of beliefs *y*. So while a person's belief *may* be justified without verifying it as true, or even attempting to verify it, nevertheless, it is not held arbitrarily or without some basis in reason.

So on our model of rationality, justification is a reason-based conception in which a person could hold a false belief but be justified in doing so.[14] As stated above, this does not necessarily mean that one's reasons will be right, but it does suggest that one has reasons for one's beliefs, reasons he thinks make that belief true. They can be reasons based on other beliefs a person thinks are true, but they can also be based in other nondoxastic states, that is, states of mind other than one's other beliefs of which a person is in some way aware. As John Pollock reminds us, for example, a person may be aware that reasoning according to *modus ponens* is somehow a correct cognitive process, and yet initially not go so far as to form a belief about it.[15] But once again, a person's justification for a belief can be a different matter from a belief's truthfulness or certainty. But in the same way that a statement's truthfulness does not depend on a person's ability to verify it, so, too, a person's reasons for being justified about a given belief do not depend on its truthfulness, or even the kind of objective certainty that could verify the belief.

Can a person be rational, then, in holding a belief for which she is *not* justified? If we mean by justification, at the very least, the reasons that a person offers for a belief, that is, reasons that are thought consistent with the kinds of reasons people typically give for their everyday putative beliefs, then a person is rational in holding only a belief for which there is some level of justification for it. But as our model of rationality suggests, the reasons that a person offers in support of a belief can be considered justified only to the extent that they are reasons which a person *thinks* are true. Such reasons may seem initially intuitive to a person. Reasons can also be based on testimony, or authority, or especially prior beliefs that one already accepts as true. Reasons are also based in perception, or memory, or some other experiential or rational state of which a person is aware.

But the point is that a person thinks she has some non-arbitrary reasons for thinking that her belief is true, even if it turns out to be false.

Summary and Conclusion

Must the rationality and justification of a cognitive belief (theistic or otherwise), then, conform to the standards of certainty and evidentialism associated with Enlightenment epistemology? It seems that we are not rationally compelled to accept this thesis. Rather, we have seen that a person's justification for a belief may be based in various kinds of reasons, such as a child's being told something by its parent, or a student by his teacher. Justification can be doxastic, that is, it can be based on a person's other beliefs. But it can be more than this. It can be nondoxastic, that is, it can be based on factors in addition to or apart from a person's other beliefs, so long as a person is offering reasons for her beliefs. So when a person seeks to justify a belief on some reason-based conception, those reasons may take a variety of acceptable forms, whether rational evidence, perceptual evidence, beliefs of memory, or from merely having some level of awareness about one's mental states.

Additionally, the criteria for rationality outlined above calls for a modified form of foundationalism. It argues that the features of foundationalist theories, that is, its conceptions of truth, evidence, the doxastic and nondoxastic relation among beliefs, objectivity, and the rationality from which it receives its epistemic structure, are essentially correct. While certain modifications and revisions of the epistemic and rational features of foundationalist theories may prove necessary, one may argue that there is still an essentially foundationalist structure for rational belief that does not conform to the tentative and provisional status of beliefs. And further still, we can agree with Alvin Plantinga's critiques of classical foundationalism that it is difficult to arrive at agreement on the criteria for basic beliefs, and conclude that we are not necessarily forced to trace all our non-basic beliefs back to basic beliefs.[16] This is not to say that a person *could not* trace one's non-basic beliefs back to basic beliefs, but rather, that there is no need to do so once enough evidence has been supplied.

In addition, as we have indicated above, our proposed notion of rationality argues for two respects or senses of rationality which are not identical: the first sense of rationality involves truth and certainty, that is, what we have been calling verification in the sense of objective certainty. But there is also a second sense of rationality that involves justification without attempts to verify a belief as true on evidence. In both respects, we are referring to what amounts to a modified or moderate foundationalism. The reasons for this are modest in nature. In the first place, as it has been suggested earlier, not all non-basic beliefs need to be traced back to basic beliefs for their justification. All we need do is supply sufficient reasons or explanations. This allows us to circumvent the stronger forms of evidentialism, while continuing to offer evidence, reasons, and explanations for our beliefs and theories.

And secondly, moderate foundationalism is a fallibilist position that is not committed to the indefeasibility of foundational beliefs. That is, one is open to the possibility that further evidence could show a given belief to be false, even though it is not expected that such will be the case. Such an epistemic structure argues for a fallibilist system in at least three ways. First, one's foundational beliefs may turn out to be unjustified *or* false, or unjustified *and* false; second, non-basic (or inferential) beliefs are only inductively, and consequently fallibly, justified by foundational beliefs. One's non-foundational beliefs can turn out false, even when the foundational beliefs from which they are inferred are true; and third, the possibility of discovering error, even among foundational beliefs, is left open.[17]

In addition, a fallibilist position raises the further question of the manner in which evidence relates to a person's foundational beliefs. If it is granted that there is always the possibility of discovering error among one's basic beliefs, then it seems reasonable to suggest that a person may at some point legitimately reassess those beliefs in light of additional evidence. That is, if at some later point, at least for me, my basic beliefs are challenged by me, I may apply evidence against those beliefs in a manner similar to the way in which I apply evidence against my non-basic beliefs. For example, as my wife and I frantically rush out the door to do our Christmas shopping, I may have the basic perceptual belief that the book I put in my front pocket is in fact the check book. This seems to meet the criteria for a belief that

is evident to my senses, and as such, it rightfully belongs among my basic beliefs. But suppose my wife challenges my basic belief. She suggests that it's quite possible that the book I have in my pocket is the savings book, and not the checking book that I perceived it to be. She reminds me that both books have blue covers, look exactly the same on the outside, and are kept in the same drawer. What choice do I have but to quickly open the book to see if the transactions recorded in the book's register are what we would expect them to be if it is in fact the check book? In such a case, it is difficult to know whether my basic belief continues to remain among my foundational beliefs. But it seems reasonable to suggest that, should I be in a position to marshal enough of the appropriate kind of evidence so as to satisfy my own challenge and become so rationally convinced that it no longer makes sense to reasonably maintain a doubt, then there seems to be no good reason why my belief cannot once again resume its place among the basic beliefs of my noetic structure.

Furthermore, since the coherence among one's beliefs plays a significant role in what is rational for a person to believe in a fallibilist position, then *incoherence* among one's beliefs may defeat verification or knowledge, even of a foundational belief. For example, my justification for believing that unicorns do not exist prevents me from remaining justified in believing that there is one in front of me. Coherence may also account for an increasing number of independent mutually consistent factors a cognizer believes to support the truth of a proposition. My justification for believing that the bag of apples is from the Clarkes, for example, increases with each new belief I acquire, all of which independently support that conclusion. Perhaps the Clarkes are good friends and are known to own a small apple orchard just outside of town. Perhaps further, they are often known to drop off bags of apples bearing a label of the family name at the homes of their friends. And further still, perhaps I have recently learned from my wife that the Clarkes have graciously agreed to supply apples for the town's apple pie bakeoff contest at the weekend community fair. Since coherence increases with each newly acquired belief in support of one's initial belief, one's being rational in holding the initial belief is further increased, even though one could ultimately be wrong about one's inferences. Perhaps, for example, I later learn from

my wife that she used an empty bag bearing a label of the Clarkes' family name to purchase apples from the market. At such a point, my earlier coherence is now defeated.[18] But while fallibilism grants that incoherence can defeat the verification of foundational beliefs, it does not regard coherence as a basic source of justification. Coherence by itself is not sufficient for justification.

To be sure, the conceptual qualifications offered in our model of rationality are quite modest in relation to the broader field of epistemology, but it is not unreasonable to think that the Christian theist can benefit from such a conception in bolstering a more effective apologetic. A good apologetic must be reflective if it is to be effective, and correctly thinking through the categories of rationality go a long way in this direction.

Notes

1. The model of rationality under consideration was initially conceived as a synthesis of the epistemologies of Nancey Murphy, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990); Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" *Nous* 15, no.1 (March 1981); "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983) ; "Epistemic Justification," *Nous* 20 (1986); and Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) and *Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
2. See, for example, Paul K. Moser, Dwayne H. Mulder, and J. D. Trout, *The Theory of Knowledge: A Thematic Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185. The authors suggest that such a model of rationality aims at the twofold cognitive goal of achieving truth in the correspondence sense and avoiding error.
3. For a similar and extended treatment of the use of modified foundationalism in fallibilist conceptions of rationality, see Steven L. Porter, *Restoring the Foundations of Epistemic Justification: A Direct Realist and Conceptualist Theory of Foundationalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).
4. For a helpful discussion on the standards employed in objective investigations, see Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis, ID:Hackett Publishing Company, 1982). Cf., John S. Feinberg, "Rationality, Objectivity, and Doing Theology: Review and Critique of Wentzel van Huyssteen's *Theology and the Justification of Faith*," *Trinity Journal* 10 (Fall 1989): 161-84.

5. Questions of the distinctions and relations of objective certainty to subjective certainty, including the role of language-games, are extensively treated in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), sect. 559, p. 73 and sect. 257, p. 34 and several other sections and *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 224, sect. 87, pp. 40-41, and p. 180. Wittgenstein's notions are effectively utilized with critical modifications in John S. Feinberg, "Truth: Relationship of Theories of Truth to Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984): 20-24 and 46, notes 60-62. I offer here a brief summary of Feinberg's discussion.
6. Feinberg, "Truth," 21.
7. Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, 224e. Cf., John S. Feinberg, "Noncognitivism: Wittgenstein," in *Biblical Errancy: An Analysis of its Philosophical Roots*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 184-5.
8. Feinberg, "Truth," 46, n. 62.
9. Ibid.
10. See, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barret (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 61-2.
11. Feinberg, "Truth," 21. Cf., Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sect. 257, 34; and Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sect. 87, 40-41 and 180.
12. Wittgenstein, Investigations, 180.
13. Louis P. Pojman, *What Can We Know? An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), 8.
14. See Stephen Robert Jacobson, "What's Wrong with Reliability Theories of Justification?" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1989), 122.
15. Cf., John L. Pollock and Joseph Cruz, ed. *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 25.
16. See, for example, Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?", in *Contemporary Perspectives in Religious Epistemology*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 135, and "Is Belief in God Rational?" in *Rationality and Religious Belief*, ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 7-27.
17. See Robert Audi, *The Structure of Justification* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 135.
18. Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (New York & London: Routledge, 1998), 205.

How to Make a Case for the Inspiration of Scripture in the Current Milieu

Steven B. Cowan

The inspiration and authority of Scripture is a major doctrine of Christianity generally. Evangelicals in particular believe that this doctrine is vital to the *bene esse* (well-being) of the faith. We believe that in the pages of Holy Scripture, God himself has spoken. The Bible is the Word of God. It is, as Paul describes it, *theopneustos* (God-breathed, 2 Tim 3:16), written by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21) so that what they wrote in the Bible was the very word of God.

This is what we believe about the Bible, but there are many who do not share our belief. And many who do not share this belief seek to challenge it as well. It is because the doctrine of the Bible's inspiration has been, and continues to be, attacked by unbelievers, that this doctrine is a central concern of Christian apologetics. I will not rehearse the many challenges to the divine authority of Scripture here. Those challenges are all too familiar to the readers of this essay. Suffice it to say that the idea that the Bible is God's authoritative, infallible, and inerrant Word is an apologetic issue. That is, the question of whether or not the Bible is God's Word is a question that Christian apologists must seek to answer.

Of course, there are many ways that apologists have sought to deal with this apologetics issue. There are some who believe that the best way to defend the Bible's authority is simply to preach it.[1] The idea is that we need not give rational arguments in defense of biblical

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inspiration but should simply preach and teach the Word, which is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12), and the Bible itself—or the Holy Spirit empowering the Bible—will convince the hearers to accept its divine origin and authority. Now I happen to think that God can and does often work this way to convince unbelievers to accept Scripture's authority (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13). What theologians call the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit is, I believe, the real and ultimate reason why anyone comes to believe that the Bible is God's word. And no doubt the internal testimony of the Spirit occurs on many occasions simply as a result of preaching the Bible. A person hears the word preached, and the Spirit witnesses to his heart and mind so that he is enabled to say, "This is God's voice that I am hearing." However, we have no reason to think that the Spirit's testimony to the authority of Scripture always occurs in this fashion apart from apologetic arguments, and reason to think that it may often function in conjunction with reason and argument (cf. Acts 17:10-11; 18:28, etc.).

Another approach is the presuppositional approach of Cornelius Van Til and his ilk. Similar to the above approach, presuppositionalists tend to disparage rational arguments made in defense of Scripture's authority. Rather, in apologetics, as in all else, the truth and authority of Scripture must be presupposed. To argue *for* the authority of Scripture is to appeal to an authority (that of human reason) that is superior to that of Scripture which, for the Christian, is not possible. It is not my purpose in this paper to provide a detailed critique of the presuppositional view on the defense of Scripture. Suffice it to say here that I do not agree that a traditional, evidential approach to Scripture places the Christian apologist in the awkward position of trying to justify Scripture by an authority more authoritative than Scripture. What the evidentialist[2] does is simply use his God-given intellect—an indispensable epistemological tool for recognizing truth and distinguishing it from error—in order to *recognize* the authority that the Bible has (and to help others come to recognize it, too).[3]

What I want to do in this article, first, is to survey the various ways that apologists of a more evidential persuasion, who believe that rational arguments in defense of Scripture's authority are appropriate, have gone about their task. Then I want to develop a version of one of these approaches that I believe makes the strongest possible apology

for that doctrine. I should say at the outset that very little of what I have to say here is original, though I do not believe that anyone has discussed my particular approach to this issue in the systematic way that I intend here.

The Inherent Character Approach to Defending Scripture

As far as I can tell, classical and evidential apologists of recent decades have taken one of two broad approaches to defending the inspiration of Scripture. The first of these I will call the *inherent character approach*. According to this approach, the Bible has certain inherent properties that imply its divine inspiration. Chad Meister's recent text, *Building Belief*,[4] exemplifies this approach well. Meister argues that the Bible is divinely inspired because (1) it contains detailed Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and (2) its message has a spiritually and morally transforming affect on many of those who read it.[5] Others who take this same general approach add qualities such as the Bible's unity and its ability to survive attempts in history to eradicate it.[6] In any case, the idea is to draw attention to certain characteristics that the Bible has that would seem best explained by appeal to divine inspiration.

This approach certainly has merit. We might very well expect a divinely inspired book to have such properties. We might expect, for example, that its message be unified and that it have a life-altering affect on readers. However, this approach also has significant weaknesses if it is used as the primary way of arguing for divine inspiration. For one thing, the unity of the Bible's content, as remarkable as it is, does not prove that it is divinely inspired. A book, even a large book written by multiple authors over a long period of time, can have a unified, consistent message and not be divinely inspired. I surmise that Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* also has thematic unity, but we do not believe that Tolkien was divinely inspired. Likewise, the fact that the message of the Bible has a life-transforming affect does not establish the inspiration of the Bible unless we are willing to concede that the Qur'an, The Lotus Sutra, The Book of Mormon, and Marx's

Communist Manifesto are all inspired as well. People who read these books report life-changing experiences just as dramatic and positive as those who read the Bible. Again, we would expect that a book inspired by God would have transforming affects on people, but having such affects is not a sufficient condition for divine inspiration.

The matter of fulfilled prophecy is more promising. Accurate and detailed predictive prophecy is tantamount to a miracle, and miracles are a sign of God's intervention into history. The Bible itself testifies to the fact that miracles provide divine attestation to revelation claims (cf. Exod. 4:1-9; Acts 2:22). A prophetic message consistent with our previous knowledge (if any) of God's nature and will, accompanied by bona fide miracles, carries God's imprimatur. Hence, being a kind of miracle, predictive prophecies also carry God's imprimatur.

Nonetheless, I believe that appealing to predictive prophecies to establish the inspiration of Scripture has some shortcomings. One problem is that the Bible is not simply one book, despite its unity. It is a collection of 66 books, written by 40-plus authors. Even if there are no exegetical issues regarding the interpretation of some of the messianic prophecies (as there certainly are), it would seem that these prophecies would *at best* establish the divine inspiration of the books that contain the prophecies. Moreover, the whole approach assumes that the New Testament Gospels that record Jesus' fulfillment of these prophecies are generally reliable, and more specifically, that the texts that report the fulfillments are historically accurate and not fabrications of the early church—points that most skeptics are not willing to grant.[7]

So, though the inherent character approach is helpful in supporting the Christian belief in the authority and inspiration of the Bible, it seems to me that it is worthwhile to consider other, perhaps stronger, alternatives. We will explore such alternatives in the next section.

The Christological Approach to Defending Scripture

The best way to defend the authority of Scripture—where "best" means being able to offer a strong argument that provides a

sufficient condition for inspiration—is, I think, to follow what I call the *Christological approach*. In lectures to my students I refer to this as the "Jesus said so" argument. In other words, we should seek to argue for the inspiration of Scripture by appealing to the authority of Jesus. That is, the argument is that we should believe the Bible is inspired *because Jesus said so*. This argument is not new.[8] I first encountered it early in my apologetic studies when I read works by Norman Geisler and R.C. Sproul. As Geisler presents it, the argument has this structure:[9]

(1) The New Testament documents are historically reliable.
(2) These documents accurately present Christ as claiming to be God incarnate and proving it by fulfilled messianic prophecy, by a sinless and miraculous life, and by predicting and accomplishing his resurrection from the dead.
(3) Whatever Christ (who is God) teaches is true.
(4) Christ taught that the Old Testament is the written Word of God and promised that his disciples would write the New Testament.
(5) Therefore, the Bible is the written Word of God.

R.C. Sproul's argument is worded somewhat differently, but it is essentially the same:[10]

(1) The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.
(2) On the basis of this reliable document we have sufficient evidence to believe confidently that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
(3) Jesus Christ being the Son of God is an infallible authority.
(4) Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is more than generally trustworthy: it is the very Word of God.
(5) The word, in that it comes from God, is utterly trustworthy because God is utterly trustworthy.
(6) Therefore, on the basis of the infallible authority of Jesus Christ, the Church believes the Bible to be utterly trustworthy, i.e., infallible [and divinely inspired].

The key premise in both cases is premise (4), the claim that Jesus taught the inspiration of the Bible in both its Old and New Testaments. This premise is, of course, dependent for its force upon the premises preceding, which establish the divine authority of Jesus by way of showing that he is in fact God incarnate. It should be apparent that, if successful, this kind of argument, which appeals directly to the testimony of a personal agent known to carry God's infallible authority, would provide a sufficient condition for the inspiration of the Bible. That is, it provides a direct and powerful deductive argument for the authority and inspiration of Scripture.

In what follows I want to distinguish two versions of this Christological approach and argue that one of them is stronger than the other and ought therefore to be the preferred way of arguing for the Bible's inspiration.

The Historical Reliability Version

The version of the Christological approach exemplified by both Geisler's and Sproul's arguments (see above)[11] I will call the *Historical Reliability Version* (HRV). I call it that because the first and all important premise makes the claim that the Bible, and specifically the New Testament, is a historically reliable document. That is, the premise asserts that the New Testament is a generally reliable source for historical information about Jesus. This version, then, depends for its success upon establishing that the New Testament is historically reliable. Only on that condition can the argument proceed to appeal to statements in the New Testament concerning Jesus' words and deeds—statements crucial to establishing the truth of premises (2) and (4) (in both arguments) that assert Jesus' resurrection and deity and his teaching concerning the Bible.

Put another way, HRV requires that one provide strong reasons to believe that the New Testament is historically reliable and then, on that premise, requires that one assume that whatever the New Testament says about the words and deeds of Jesus is true. It might be thought that what HRV requires after premise (1) is that one assume that the New Testament is inerrant. But that would not be quite right. All it requires is that the New Testament accounts of Jesus are innocent until proven

guilty, that the critic of the authenticity of any account bears the burden of proof. As Craig Blomberg explains, once one has established that a particular work is historically reliable,

> one must immediately recognize an important presupposition that guides most historians in their work. Unless there is good reason for believing otherwise, one will assume that a given detail in the work of a particular historian is factual. This method places the burden of proof squarely on the person who would doubt the reliability of a given portion of the text.[12]

So, HRV does not require the assumption that a historical document is inerrant. Yet, it does require something close to that, namely, the "working hypothesis" that any assertions in the New Testament are to be taken as true *unless and until* they are shown to be false. We might say that HRV requires a kind of provisional, practical inerrancy. Of course, establishing the plausibility of this working hypothesis requires that one do the hard work of showing that the New Testament is historically reliable. Followers of HRV will accomplish this task typically by subjecting the New Testament documents to the three famous tests for historical reliability: the bibliographic, internal, and external tests.[13]

I am highly sympathetic to such arguments for historical reliability. I believe that there is ample evidence to support the conviction that the New Testament Gospels are indeed reliable sources for the historical Jesus. Furthermore, I believe that HRV provides the apologist with a plausible and potentially persuasive argument for the inspiration of the Bible. Certainly, if the apologist is engaging someone who is willing to grant the historical reliability of the New Testament and assume that the text is true unless *proven* false, then the apologist may have a relatively easy time in arguing for the other premises in the argument. Nevertheless, I do not believe that it gives the apologist the best and strongest case for the Bible's inspiration, at least not in the current academic climate.

First, it must be admitted that, in general, documents that are generally historically reliable usually contain errors even if we cannot readily identify them. No one expects that fallible human authors of

significant historical works will get everything right. Furthermore, the more controversial and extraordinary a claim that an author makes, the more suspicious we are of his accuracy. No matter how reliable and competent in general we think Shelby Foote is in his historical works on the Civil War, if he told us that Lincoln's assassination was staged and that the sixteenth President lived for many more years as a circus clown in Brazil, we would likely reject that claim even if we could not prove it false. This is why Christians and non-Christians alike, as Gary Habermas has argued,[14] dismiss the miracle stories found in the works of Tacitus, Suetonius, and other ancient historians concerning the Roman emperors even though these authors are treated as generally historically reliable. When we run across a miracle-story or some other out-of-the-ordinary claim in a historical document, we tend to be (perhaps *ought* to be) a bit skeptical and may think we have a *prima facie* reason to doubt the story, all things being equal—even if that story occurs in an otherwise reliable document to which we generally give the benefit of the doubt. So, even if someone grants the apologist that the Gospels are historically reliable in general, he may plausibly question the accuracy of the accounts of Jesus' nature miracles or that he claimed to be God, etc., even though he may not be able to show that the story is false.

Secondly, the current academic climate in biblical studies is such that the historical reliability of the Bible is generally rejected. Despite the arguments for reliability put forth by evangelical apologists, it is still the case that many, if not most, biblical scholars believe that the New Testament Gospels are largely fictitious fabrications of the early church. Now if this opinion was simply that of a few ivory-tower academics it would not be that significant to the apologist's task. But the fact is that this attitude toward the New Testament books has widely infected the popular culture in part because the mainstream media has given a platform to scholars like those in the Jesus Seminar, Bart Ehrman, and others. And it does not help matters when novels like Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* concoct conspiracy theories about the origins of the Gospels and pass them off as historical facts. So, good arguments or not, the idea that the New Testament is historically reliable is in serious disfavor culturally.

Of course, one possible response to this cultural trend is to fight the uphill battle and continue defending the historical reliability of the New Testament as the first step in an argument for the Bible's inspiration. The advocate of HRV certainly has that option. Pursuing this option will not alleviate the first concern raised above, however. The problem will remain that general historical reliability alone will not justify credulity toward the Bible's more extraordinary claims. Would it not be a welcome improvement to the Christological approach, then, if it could provide an argument for inspiration that does not require the premise of historical reliability—one that even seeks to give positive evidence for the New Testament's more spectacular claims? This is the promise of the second version of the Christological approach.

The Critical Version

As indicated above, most contemporary New Testament scholars approach the Gospels, fairly or unfairly, with a skeptical eye, treating the portrait of Jesus contained in them as largely legendary, the fabrication of the post-Easter consciousness of the early church. Yet, most New Testament scholars (leaving aside the Jesus Seminar) believe that it is possible to peer through the legendary accretions and recover accurate information about the sayings and deeds of the historical Jesus. They accomplish this feat through the use of what are called the *criteria of authenticity*. These are principles that may be employed to study works that are not considered generally reliable historically in order to identify stories and sayings within those works that are historically authentic. So, in theory, the New Testament scholar can apply these criteria to particular sayings or deeds of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and make probable (sometimes highly probable) judgments to the affect that, "Yes, Jesus really said or did that." The most commonly employed criteria of authenticity are:

(1) *The criterion of dissimilarity*—if a saying of Jesus is different from what was taught in first-century Judaism and from what was taught in the post-Easter church, then it is authentic.

(2) *The criterion of multiple attestation*—if a saying or deed of Jesus is attested in more than one independent source, then it is authentic.[15]
(3) *The criterion of embarrassment*—a saying or deed of Jesus, or other report in the Gospels, that would prove awkward or embarrassing from the standpoint of the writer or the early church is authentic.
(4) *The criterion of Palestinian environment*—a saying or deed of Jesus that reflects an early Palestinian cultural or social context is authentic.
(5) *The criterion of coherence*—a saying or deed of Jesus that does not pass any of the previous four criteria but significantly coheres with those sayings and deeds which do is authentic.

The basic point behind the use of these criteria is that individual stories, pericope, sayings, and deeds within the Gospels that meet these criteria can be said to be items of historical knowledge. And these items are known apart from any assumption of the Gospels' divine inspiration or even historical reliability. The items that pass these tests are known on *purely historical grounds*—grounds accessible to believer and unbeliever alike.

At this point we need to point out that from the standpoint of logic, these criteria can only be used as positive, and not negative, tests for authenticity. That is, we can say with some confidence that New Testament texts that pass these criteria are authentic. But, we *cannot* say that texts which fail to meet these criteria are inauthentic. It simply doesn't follow logically that texts that cannot be known to be authentic must therefore be inauthentic. All we can legitimately say about texts that do no meet the criteria is that they are not known (on historical grounds) to be authentic. Sound historical method requires a withholding of judgment one way or the other on such texts. Yet, it is here that many liberal scholars—especially the Jesus Seminar—falter. They tend to approach the Gospels with the unwarranted assumption that they are guilty until proven innocent, legendary unless proven authentic. Armed with this assumption they automatically assume

further that any text that fails to meet the criteria of authenticity must be a fabrication of the early church.[16]

Many Christian philosophers and apologists are probably familiar with the use of these criteria in recent years in support of the biblical portrait of Jesus and his resurrection. Conservative New Testament scholars like Craig Blomberg, Darrell Bock, Craig Evans, Ben Witherington, and others, have used this historical methodology to authenticate a wide range of material in the Gospel tradition and show, contrary to the likes of the Jesus Seminar, that the historical Jesus was very much like what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John describe him to be.[17] Furthermore, apologists such as William Lane Craig and Gary Habermas have utilized these criteria to make powerful arguments for the resurrection of Jesus by showing that the accounts of Jesus' resurrection are authentic.[18]

Somewhat less known, but not completely absent, are attempts to argue for the divine inspiration of Scripture on the same grounds, utilizing the criteria of authenticity to establish the historical fact that Jesus taught the Bible's divine authority, and bolstering that teaching with the evidence for his resurrection and claims to deity. James E. Taylor is one scholar who gives a brief sketch of this approach, but does not develop it. He writes,

> If Jesus is the risen Son of God, then we can trust what he says. We have good historical grounds for believing that Jesus regarded the Old Testament as God's Word, and therefore we have good reason to believe that it is. In addition, to the extent that we have good historical reasons to think that Jesus really said what the Gospel writers report, we have good reason to regard those dominical sayings as the Word of God. Moreover, Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel about him to the world. He told them he would send the Holy Spirit to enable them to remember what he had taught them. Since we have good historical grounds for thinking that the New Testament documents were written by an apostle, someone closely associated with an apostle who would be able reliably to record his teaching, or at least someone who faithfully

> employed apostolic sources, it is reasonable to conclude that the New Testament is God's Word.[19]

After giving a brief discussion of Jesus' teaching on the inspiration of Old and New Testaments from both a more traditional (that is, HRV) stance and a critical one, Gary Habermas also provides a sketch of the structure of the whole argument:

> Using both traditional and critical paths to determine that Jesus firmly taught inspiration, we may reassert our earlier assumption that if God raised Jesus from the dead, then the most likely reason was to confirm the truthfulness of Jesus' teachings. If we are correct in this, then the inspiration of Scripture follows as a verified doctrine, affirmed by God Himself when He raised Jesus from the dead.[20]

This approach to defending the inspiration of Scripture by utilizing the criteria of authenticity to establish Jesus' belief in the Bible's inspiration, together with his teaching concerning his own deity and the historicity of the resurrection verified by the same means, I will call the *Critical Version* (CV) of the Christological approach to defending Scripture. As far as I know, no one has ever laid out the CV approach to the inspiration of the Bible in a formal way. In the remainder of this essay, I wish to do so and make some comments on the defense of the argument's premises. The structure of the argument may be formalized as follows:

(1) Jesus taught that he is God incarnate.
(2) God authenticated Jesus' teaching by raising him from the dead.
(3) Hence, Jesus is God incarnate.
(4) Jesus (God incarnate) taught that the Old Testament is divinely inspired and he promised the inspiration of the New Testament through his apostles.
(5) Therefore, the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is divinely inspired.

The first thing to notice about this argument is that it neither makes nor assumes any claims about the Bible's historical reliability. CV defends its premises—(1), (2), and (4)—by employing the criteria of authenticity. This clearly sets CV apart from HRV and shows it to be a stronger and potentially more persuasive argument. Let's consider briefly how CV can establish the truth of the premises without the assumption of historical reliability.

Comment on Premise (1). Much work has already been done by conservative scholars in showing that the historical Jesus made exalted claims about his identity.[21] I cannot rehearse all of that research here, but I will mention one line of evidence corroborated by the criteria of authenticity. It is well-known that Jesus' favorite self-designation was "Son of Man." We know that Jesus used this title of himself, first, because it meets the criterion of dissimilarity. The title is used of Jesus (at most) only three times in the New Testament outside the Gospels and just as rarely in other early Christian writings. It was also not a title given to the Messiah in the first century. The title also meets the criterion of multiple attestation, being found in every layer of the Gospel tradition (e.g., *Mark*: Mark 2:10; 10:45; 14:62 / *Q*: Matt. 11:19= Luke 7:34 / *Matthew*: Matt. 13:37, 41 / *Luke*: Luke 18:8 / John 3:13). The significance of this title, first and foremost, is that it is connected by Mark (14:62) to the divine Son of Man figure in Daniel 7:13-14. Moreover, in Mark 2:10, the "Son of Man" has the power on earth to forgive sins, something that only God can do. And in John 3:13-18, the "Son of Man" is the one who has "descended from heaven" and is the "only begotten Son of God."

Comment on Premise (2). The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is well-attested and has been elaborated and defended ably by several Christian apologists, as I mentioned above. Those who defend the resurrection using the criteria of authenticity typically argue that there are a handful of facts established by the criteria that are best explained by the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead.[22] These facts include (a) Jesus' empty tomb, (b) the post-mortem appearances of Jesus, and (c) the belief of the disciples in the resurrection of Jesus. I will not rehearse the details of these arguments, either, but suffice it to say that each of these facts is multiply attested and passes other of the criteria of authenticity. It is important to emphasize, though, that

there are no plausible naturalistic explanations for these facts. All the naturalistic proposals to date lack explanatory power and scope (i.e., no naturalistic hypothesis really explains the facts adequately, and no one naturalistic hypothesis explains *all* the facts). The hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead, on the other hand, has clear explanatory power and maximum explanatory scope. If God raised Jesus from the dead, then we can explain why the tomb was found empty, why the disciples saw post-mortem appearances of Jesus, and why they came to believe he was resurrected. And this one hypothesis accounts for all the facts together. Hence, we have strong evidence that God raised Jesus from the dead.

At this point, it might be helpful to interject that I think that CV is strongest when presented in the context of a theistic worldview. That is, the argument will have its greatest force if the apologist and his interlocutor already assume the existence of God. Indeed, I have stated premise (2) in a way that can be taken to presuppose the existence of God. What I am saying is that CV fits most comfortably with a *classical apologetic methodology* in which God's existence is established via natural theology and is then part of one's background knowledge as one comes to the question of historical evidences for Christianity. This does not mean that only classical apologists can use CV. After all, one of its major proponents, Gary Habermas, is an *evidential* apologist who believes that one can use the evidence for the resurrection as an argument for God's existence. Nevertheless, it seems to me and other classical apologists that if one already knows that God exists—a God who can perform miracles—then when one comes to the question of Jesus' resurrection, one can significantly increase the antecedent probability of Jesus resurrection, thus making the case for that miracle stronger than it would otherwise be.[23]

Another ancillary point to premise (2) is captured by Craig when he concludes, "Given the religio-historical context in which this event occurred, the significance of Jesus' resurrection is clear: it is the divine vindication of Jesus' radical personal claims."[24] Being a divine miracle, Jesus' resurrection is *ipso facto* a divine endorsement of his teaching. We may reasonably surmise that God is not in the habit of raising false prophets from the dead. And Jesus certainly claimed to be a prophet and much more—he claimed to be God incarnate, as we have

seen. God's resurrecting him, then, must constitute a vindication of his teaching about himself. This point allows us to draw the inference in step (3) of the argument that Jesus is God incarnate.

Comment on Premise (4). Not only does God's resurrection of Jesus vindicate his claim to deity, it vindicates his teaching on any other topic on which he spoke. Premise (4) thus carries the burden of showing that Jesus had something to say about the inspiration of Scripture. That burden can be met by citing texts in the Gospels in which Jesus teaches the inspiration of Scripture and showing that those texts meet the criteria of authenticity.

Regarding the Old Testament, we know that Jesus acknowledged and embraced the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures held by his Jewish contemporaries. He referred more than once to the Hebrew Scriptures by the common phrase, "The Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 5:17; 22:40), and at least once to the three-fold division of the Hebrew Old Testament: "Law, Prophets, and Psalms" (Luke 24:44). This should come as no surprise. Being a Jew in first-century Palestine, Jesus would naturally appeal to the same body of Scripture and have the same view of them as his contemporaries. These sayings aptly meet the criterion of Palestinian environment. And what view, precisely, would Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries have of the Hebrew Scriptures? Obviously, they would have thought of them as the Word of God.

This perspective on Jesus' view of the Old Testament is corroborated by the work of John Wenham. He delineates Jesus' view of the Hebrew Scriptures under the following headings, each of which is multiply attested:[25]

(1) *Jesus treated the Old Testament narratives as records of fact* (*Mark*: Mark 2:23-28 / *Q*: Matt. 11:23-24=Luke 10:13-15; Matt. 23:34-36=Luke 11:49-51 / *John* 8:56-58).

(2) *Jesus appealed authoritatively to the Old Testament in matters of controversy* (*Mark*: Mark 12:18-27; 12:18-27 / *Q*: Matt. 5:17-20=Luke 16:16-17; Matt. 11:2-6=Luke 7:18-23 / *M*: Matt. 9:13).

(3) *Jesus appealed to the Old Testament as an authoritative guide to ethics* (*Mark*: Mark 10:2-9 / *John* 7:19).

(4) *Jesus quoted the Old Testament as binding on himself at his temptations* (*Mark*: Mark 1:12-13 / *Q*: Matt. 4:1-11=Luke4:1-13).[26]
(5) *Jesus taught that the Old Testament bore witness to him* (*L*: Luke 24:25-27 / *John* 5:39-40).
(6) *Jesus attributed the authorship of Old Testament passages to God* (*Mark*: Mark 7:6-8; 10:6-9; 12:36 / *M*: Matt. 1:22-23; 2:15 / *John* 10:35).
(7) *Jesus taught that Old Testament prophecies must be fulfilled* (*M*: Matt. 26:54 / *L*: Luke 24:25-27, 44 / *John* 13:18).

I submit, along with Wenham, that the best explanation for these multiply attested facts is that Jesus believed the Old Testament to be divinely inspired as did his Jewish contemporaries.

Concerning the New Testament, we have historical evidence supporting the following two statements:

(1) Jesus commissioned the apostles to be his authoritative spokesmen (*Mark*: Mark 3:13-19 / *M*: Matt. 16:18-19; 28:18-20 / *Q*: Matt. 19:28=Luke18:30 / *L*: Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8).
(2) Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit to enable them to remember his teaching and provide further divine revelation (*Mark*: Mark 13:11 / *L*: Luke 24:48-49 / *John* 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15).

As Wenham explains, this historical evidence shows that "Jesus in principle authenticated the New Testament."[27] We may add that the notion that Jesus would promise the divine inspiration of his apostolic ambassadors is coherent with what was established under premise (1) of the CV argument. If Jesus claimed to be God incarnate, it is not inconsistent to believe that he would promise to inspire his apostles to receive special revelation in the New Covenant era just as God did for his prophets in the old covenant era.

With the historical knowledge that Jesus taught the divine inspiration of the Bible, coupled with the earlier conclusion that he is God incarnate (and thus inerrant in what he teaches), we may infer

that the Bible is the Word of God. Such is the structure of CV. Of course, I have provided here only an outline of the main contours of the argument. Various details concerning the premises have been developed and elaborated more thoroughly by others as I indicated. It is my hope that Christian apologists who teach and write in the field will incorporate CV into their work and seek to equip others to use it for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

On the Place of Historical Reliability and Prophetic Fulfillment

Let me conclude by commenting on how I see evidence for the Bible's reliability as well as its unity and transforming power fitting in with the use of CV. Since the CV argument does not require the historical reliability of the Bible to establish divine inspiration—nor an antecedent commitment to unity or transforming power—it would seem to me that discussions of these things can properly *follow* discussions of inspiration as necessary corollaries of the latter. In other words, once we have determined that the Bible is divinely revealed, we may ask what other characteristics this inspired book will have. We may plausibly conclude that an inspired book will be historically reliable insofar as it addresses historical matters. We will likely conclude (as we in fact do) that the Bible is inerrant. We may likewise conclude that its message will be unified and consistent. And we may surmise that at least one purpose for which God has given us the Bible is to make us better.

Once we have drawn such conclusions, we may treat them as items to be tested to further corroborate (or disconfirm) our initial belief in inspiration, much as a scientist treats the implications of his theories. So, we look for evidence of the Bible's historical reliability; we seek to find solutions to texts that appear errant; we seek to show the Bible's intrinsic unity; and we observe the lives of those who believe the Bible to be God's Word to see how that belief has made them better. And if, as we believe, the Bible is divinely inspired, our search for such things will be fruitful.

But what about fulfilled prophecy? This was another aspect of the inherent character approach and often plays a role in many types of evidentialist defenses of Scripture. It would seem to me that fulfilled prophecy, specifically Jesus' fulfillment of messianic prophecies, can come into play at two points in the argument for Scripture. First, any prophetic fulfillments that can be shown to meet the criteria of authenticity (e.g., the virgin conception accounts and Jesus' birth in Bethlehem are both multiply attested) can play a significant role in defense of premise (1), supporting Jesus' claims to be Messiah and God. Second, those same fulfillments, insofar as they are historically verified by the criteria of authenticity, can supplement the case for the inspiration of the Old Testament. Though premise (4) of the argument seeks to ground our apologetic for the Old Testament in the verbal testimony of Jesus, his life of fulfilled prophecy can provide further corroboration that the Hebrew Scriptures are the Word of God.

Notes

1. I have been told that Charles Spurgeon held this opinion, saying that we need not defend the Bible any more than we need to defend a lion. Rather, we just need to set it loose!
2. The term "evidentialism" is used in three distinct ways in apologetic and philosophical circles. In the first sense, it refers to a family of apologetic methods that share a similar approach to the relationship between faith and reason, namely, that they are compatible and that reason may provide rational support for the truth of the Christian religion, reasons that appeal to "common ground" between believers and unbelievers. In the second sense, "evidentialism" refers to one particular school of apologetics in the family of methods mentioned under the first sense—the school that stresses the offering primarily of historical evidences for the deity and resurrection of Jesus without a prior philosophical argument for God's existence. Thirdly, "evidentialism" can refer to the arch-enemy of Reformed epistemology, namely, the view that it is wrong to accept any belief without sufficient evidence. In this paper (with one exception), I am using "evidentialism" in the first sense only.
3. Interestingly, however, even apologists in the evidential family of apologetics often neglect to address the topic of Scripture's inspiration. For example, two very popular apologetics texts are J.P. Moreland's *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) and William Lane Craig's *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994). Both of these books contain detailed and persuasive arguments for the historical reliability of the Bible (a conclusion that can play a role in an argument for inspiration),

but have nothing to say by way of defending the Bible's inspiration per se. A more recent apologetics anthology is touted on its back cover as providing a "comprehensive Christian response" to challenges to Christianity and including essays on "all major aspects of apologetics" (Francis J. Beckwith, et al., *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004]), yet it contains no article defending even the historical reliability of Scripture, much less its divine inspiration. I have no idea why these texts neglect the topic at hand. Fortunately, other apologetics texts do not.

4. Chad Meister, *Building Belief: Constructing Faith from the Ground Up* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).
5. Meister also cites the internal testimony of the Spirit as evidence that individuals who have it can look to in order to confirm their belief in the Bible's inspiration. However, this does not seem to be a point on which he would build an apologetic case.
6. See, e.g., A.W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible* (Authors for Christ, 2007).
7. Of course, if appeal to the fulfillment of prophecy is preceded by a defense of the New Testament's historical reliability (as in the case of Meister's book), then this last point loses some of its force.
8. This approach to defending the inspiration of Scripture appears to trace back to B.B. Warfield in his book, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia, Presbyterion and Reformed, 1967), esp. 114-118.
9. See Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 353.
10. R.C. Sproul, "The Case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis," in *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture*, ed. John W. Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1974), 242-61.
11. Another popular text that takes the same approach is Winfried Corduan, *No Doubt About It: The Case for Christianity* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997).
12. Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 304.
13. For discussions and applications of these tests see Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, rev. ed. (San Bernadino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1979), 39-78; Meister, *Building Belief*, 129-147; Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 305-327; Corduan, *No Doubt About It*, 185-203; Craig Blomberg, "Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?," in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, eds, Michael Wilkins and J.P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 17-50.
14. See Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 255n3.
15. This criterion is most often employed in light of the Four-source Hypothesis that holds that there are four independent sources behind the synoptic tradition: Mark (from whom Luke and Matthew borrowed), Q (the source for the material

common to Luke and Matthew but absent from Mark), L (the source for the material unique to Luke), and M (the source for the material unique to Matthew). When one adds the material in John's Gospel and the testimony of Paul's epistles, there are six potential sources for applying the criterion of multiple attestation.

16. See the articles in Wilkins and Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire*, for ample documentation of this egregious approach to the NT Gospels. Another critical error in methodology that many liberal scholars commit is the inconsistent application of the criteria of authenticity. This results in many texts that ought to pass muster being dismissed as inauthentic. Such inconsistent application of the criteria appears to be usually motivated by a hidden Christological criterion that refuses to allow any text to be recognized as authentic if it supports a high Christology, whether or not it meets stated criteria of authenticity. As Darrell Bock puts it, this approach is not good historiography but philosophical bias (see Darrell Bock, "The Words of Jesus in the Gospels: Live, Jive, or Memorex," in *Jesus Under Fire*, 90-94).
17. See, Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 310-321; *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Craig A. Evans, "What Did Jesus Do?" in *Jesus Under Fire*, 101-115; *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); Darrell L. Bock, "The Words of Jesus"; *Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); Ben Witherington, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995).
18. William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1981); *Reasonable Faith*, 255-298; Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case of the Resurrection of Jesus*. See also, N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).
19. James E. Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics: Cultivating Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 277-278.
20. Gary R. Habermas, "Jesus and the Inspiration of Scripture," *Areopagus Journal* 2:1 (January 2002): 11-16.
21. See, e.g., William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 243-252; Ben Witherington, "The Christology of Jesus Revisted," in *To Everyone an Answer*, 145-159; Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 166-171.
22. See Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 272-298; Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 43-77.
23. For more on this point, see William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Closing Remarks," in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 316-17, 324-27.
24. Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 297.
25. John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 16-34.

26. Here the Old Testament quotations themselves are not multiply attested but merely the fact that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. Nevertheless, the Old Testament quotations are found in Q, an early reliable source.
27. Ibid., 113.

Using the Death of Jesus to Refute Islam

Michael R. Licona

Prior to 9/11, few Americans thought about Islam. Since then, Muslims have made front page news almost daily. A number of Christian apologists and scholars, such as Joshua Lingel, Sam Shamoun, Jay Smith, and David Wood, have stepped up to the plate and interacted seriously with Islam's truth claims. In this essay, I wish to argue that Jesus' first century fate is an effective challenge to, and even a refutation of, Islam.

The Problem

The death and resurrection of Jesus have a monumental presence within the writings of the New Testament. Jesus asserted that his resurrection from the dead would be proof that he is who he claimed to be (Matt. 12:38-40; Luke 11:29-30; John 2:18-22). Accordingly, without Jesus' death, there is no atonement and no resurrection. In that case, according to Paul, our faith is worthless, we will still be judged for our sins, and those friends and family members who have died as Christians are forever lost (1 Cor. 15:17-18). Islam asserts that Jesus did not die in the first century. Because Jesus' death plays a very major role in the apostolic preaching, if Jesus did not die, apostolic Christianity is gravely mistaken.

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The Muslim View

The *Qur'an* clearly denies the first century death of Jesus:

> And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger - they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise. (4:157-58, Pickthall's translation)

The *Gospel of Barnabas* (GB) provides a narrative of what actually occurred as Muslims view the events. Upon being alerted that others had come to arrest him, Jesus retreated in hiding to a room. At God's command, four angels took Jesus up into heaven. When Judas entered the room in which Jesus had been hiding, God changed both his voice and his appearance to be the same as those of Jesus. Those who had come to arrest Jesus found Judas and took him instead.[1] All of Jesus' disciples—including the author Barnabas—his mother, his family, and friends were all convinced Jesus had been arrested and killed. Nicodemus and Joseph of Abarimathea removed Judas's corpse from the cross and buried it in Joseph's new tomb.[2] However, a few impious disciples stole the body and proclaimed Jesus had been raised from the dead.[3]

In answer to Jesus' prayer while in heaven, God allows the four angels to return Jesus to earth where he meets his mother, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, the author Barnabas, John, James, and Peter.[4] Jesus tells them that he did not die and calls upon the four angels to tell them what had actually occurred. Barnabas then asks Jesus why a merciful God allowed them to endure enormous grief from believing he was dead. Jesus answers that it was punishment because they did not love him enough and that it would save them from hell. Moreover, since some have called Jesus "God" and "Son of God," God has allowed others to believe that Jesus was killed so that humans would mock him in this world rather than demons mocking him on the

judgment day. However, Muhammad will come later and will reveal God's deception.[5]

Jesus then asks Barnabas to write the truth about what really happened to him so that "the faithful may be undeceived and every one may believe the truth." Then James and John brought the other "faithful disciples" to Jesus. These included seven disciples, Nicodemus, Joseph, and many of the seventy-two. Two days later, Jesus reproved those who believed he had died and been raised and reiterated that it was Judas who had actually been executed. "Beware, for Satan will make every effort to deceive you. Be my witnesses in Israel, and throughout the world, of all things that you have heard and seen." Then the four angels carried him back to heaven.[6]

The true disciples are then persecuted by those who preach lies, such as those who say that Jesus died but was not resurrected, those who say that Jesus died and was resurrected, and those like Paul who say that Jesus is the Son of God.[7]

Still another Muslim argument against Jesus' death by crucifixion concerns the Sign of Jonah provided by Jesus in Matthew 12:39-40:

> For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster three days and three nights, in this manner the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. (translation mine)

Muslim apologists contend that, if Jesus' analogy is to be taken seriously, we must conclude that since Jonah did not die, neither did Jesus.

The Historical Evidence for Jesus' Death by Crucifixion

For theists, the Muslim view is not impossible. For if God could have raised Jesus from the dead, he could just as easily have rescued him as described generally in the *Qur'an* or specifically in the *Gospel*

of Barnabas. However, the question is not *what God can do*, but rather *what God did.*

There are at least three reasons pertinent to our discussion for believing that Jesus of Nazareth died as a result of being crucified. First, *Jesus' death by crucifixion is multiply attested by a fair number of ancient sources, Christian and non-Christian alike.* It is very probable that Josephus reported the event in his original version of *Antiquities* 18:3.[8] Tacitus, Lucian, and Mara bar Serapion are all certainly aware of the event.[9] Lucian adds that Jesus' crucifixion took place in Palestine.[10] In Christian sources, Jesus' execution is widely reported, with and without specifying the mode of crucifixion. All four canonical Gospels report Jesus' death by crucifixion as do numerous other books and letters of the New Testament that refer to it regularly.[11] Jesus' death and/or crucifixion are abundantly mentioned in the non-canonical literature.[12] Moreover, there is no ancient evidence to the contrary.[13]

Second, *the reports of Jesus' death by crucifixion are early.* Paul mentions Jesus' death by crucifixion no later than AD 55 and said he preached the same to those in Corinth in AD 51 or within twenty-one years of Jesus' crucifixion.[14] Jesus' death may be alluded to in *Q*, which may be contemporary to Paul.[15] It appears numerous times in the *kerygma* of the oral formulas. The earliest report of Jesus' death is found in the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3. Virtually all scholars who have written on the subject hold that Paul here provides tradition about Jesus which he received from others.[16] There is likewise widespread agreement that it was composed very early, reflected what was being taught by the Jerusalem apostles, and is the oldest extant tradition pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus.[17] It is really quite amazing to think that we are probably reading what was taught by the original disciples of Jesus.

Third, *the reports of Jesus' death by crucifixion meet the criterion of embarrassment.* While there are a number of accounts of Jewish martyrs who all acted bravely under circumstances of extreme torture and execution,[18] reports of Jesus' arrest and martyrdom show a weaker and more human Jesus, one who could cause embarrassment in contrast.

When we come to the Passion narratives in the canonical Gospels, we find a number of traits shared with the other martyrdom

stories. Like all of the others, once arrested, Jesus stands bold in his convictions. In all, there are moments of great composure during their painful ordeals. Jesus offers a prayer to God as do Eleazar, Stephen, Polycarp, and Rabbi Akiba. Even Jesus' enemies are impressed with his behavior while under great duress (Mark 15:4-5, 39; Matt. 27:54; Luke 23:39-42, 47; John 19:7-12) as are those witnessing the martyrdoms of the seven brothers, Eleazar, Polycarp, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Hanina ben Taradion.

However, the accounts of Jesus' martyrdom also differ significantly from the others. Whereas a number of the martyrdom reports seem constructed to provide encouragement to others who may face similar situations, the Passion narratives of Jesus provide no such encouragement. Jesus anguishes over his impending treatment and wants to avoid it if at all possible (Mark 14:32-42; Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46). This would certainly not inspire those whom he had told to take up their own cross and follow him if they wanted to be his disciples (Mark 8:34; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23). Rather than proclaiming that he will not forsake God or his Law as did many of the Jewish martyrs, Jesus instead cries out asking why God has forsaken him (Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46). Given the embarrassing nature of this comment from despair, it is unlikely to be an invention of the early Church.[19] In contrast, the words of the martyrs are often defiant: "Do whatever you want to me." "I will not forsake God's Law." "You will be punished by God." "I could have saved myself but did not for God's sake." "May my death be substitutionary." "Bring it on!" "Racks and stones may break my bones, but resurrection awaits me!" Instead of saying "God will punish you" (seven brothers, Polycarp), Jesus says, "Father, forgive them."[20]

We must keep in mind that only the reports of the seven brothers and Eleazar pre-date Jesus, while Stephen, Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Hanina ben Taradion, and Polycarp post-date him. However, given Roman rule in Jerusalem which brutally crushed any suspicion of rebellion, reports of the seven brothers and Eleazar are likely to have been widely known there. If so, many of the differences between Jesus in the Passion narratives and the seven brothers and Eleazar must have stood out immediately to the early readers and would most likely have been quite embarrassing for Christians. For this reason, we get a sense

that in the canonical Gospels we are reading authentic reports of Jesus' arrest and death, even if a cleaning up or omission may have occurred to some of those embarrassing details by Luke and to all of them by John and even if some encomiastic elements were added.[21] Accordingly, the embarrassing elements in the Passion narratives weigh in favor of the presence of historical kernels. These include, most importantly in our investigation, Jesus' death by crucifixion.

While historians may be open to the possibility that Jesus survived his crucifixion, historians must be guided by probabilities. Given the strong evidence for Jesus' crucifixion, without good evidence to the contrary the historian must conclude that the process killed him. This is the conclusion shared by virtually all scholars who have studied the subject. McIntyre comments,

> Even those scholars and critics who have been moved to depart from almost everything else within the historical content of Christ's presence on earth have found it impossible to think away the factuality of the death of Christ.[22]

McIntyre is quite correct. Atheist Gerhard Lüdemann writes, "Jesus' death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable."[23] For the Jewish scholar Vermes, "The passion of Jesus is part of history."[24] The rather skeptical scholar Paula Fredriksen writes, "The single most solid fact about Jesus' life is his death: he was executed by the Roman prefect Pilate, on or around Passover, in the manner Rome reserved particularly for political insurrectionists, namely, crucifixion."[25]

In summary, the historical evidence is very strong that Jesus died by crucifixion. The event is multiply attested by a number of ancient sources, some of which are non-Christian and, thus, not biased toward a Christian interpretation of events. They appear in multiple literary forms, being found in annals, historiography, biography, letters, and tradition in the form of creeds, oral formulae, and hymns. Some of the reports are very early and can reasonably be traced to the Jerusalem apostles. Finally, the Passion narratives appear credible, since they fulfill the criterion of embarrassment. That Jesus was crucified and

died as a result is granted by the overwhelming majority of scholars studying the subject.

Islamic Catch-22

Despite the overwhelming historical evidence supporting Jesus' death by crucifixion, it seems to me that a Muslim might respond that this only demonstrates the truth of the *Qur'an*, since everyone was tricked into believing that Jesus had died as a result of being crucified just as the *Qur'an* and GB state. However, the Muslim view that God rescued Jesus from death comes at a high price that Muslims cannot pay. In his 1961 novel *Catch-22*, Joseph Heller described situations where no choice exists for achieving a desired outcome. This type of situation came to be referred to by the book's title, a "*Catch-22*." Given the *Qur'an*'s view of Jesus' fate, Muslims are in what we may refer to as an "Islamic Catch-22."

We must start with the fact that Jesus predicted his imminent and violent death. There are at least six strong reasons in support. First, the accounts of the predictions are early, being found in abundance in Mark's Gospel, which most scholars believe was written somewhere between twenty-five to forty-five years after Jesus' death. There is also a hint of an Aramaic original in the passion prediction of Mark 9:31 where a *vorlage* presents a play on words: the *Son of Man* is to be *handed* over to the *hands* of *men*.[26]

Second, the passion and resurrection predictions are multiply attested, as the following tables show.[27]

Table 1: Jesus Predicting His Death and Resurrection: Mark, Matthew, John

Mark

- Related to Peter's rebuke: Mark 8:31; Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22
- After Jesus' Transfiguration: Mark 9:9; Matt. 17:9
- Passing through Galilee: Mark 9:30-31; Matt. 17:22-23
- Going up to Jerusalem: Mark 10:33-34; Matt. 20:18-19
- Last Supper: Mark 14:18-28; Matt. 26:21-32; Luke 22:15-20

Matthew

- Sign of Jonah: Matt. 12:38-40 (cf. Luke 11:29-30); 16:2-4 (cf. Luke 12:54-56)[28]

John

- Related to Destruction of Temple: John 2:18-22 (cf. Mark 14:58; 15:29; Matt. 26:61-62)

Table 2: Jesus Predicting His Death Only: Mark, Luke, John

Mark

- Ransom for Many: Mark 10:45
- Vineyard and Wicked Tenants: Mark 12:1-12; Matt. 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19
- Garden: Mark 14:32-40; Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46

Luke

- Prophet Cannot Die Outside of Jerusalem: Luke 13:32-33

John

- Jesus Lifted Up: John 3:13-14; 8:28; 12:32-34

Even more importantly, the passion predictions appear in multiple literary forms, being found in logia involving parable (Mark 12:1-12) and simple didactic.[29]

Third, the passion and resurrection predictions fulfill the criterion of embarrassment. There is, in fact, a double embarrassment. In his garden prayer, Jesus "wants out" if possible (Mark 14:32-40; Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46) and there is the embarrassing portrayal of the disciples who do not understand Jesus' passion predictions or simply did not believe him (Mark 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 14:27-31; Luke 24:11, 21).[30] Of special interest is that in the midst of these predictions the first leader of the church is twice portrayed in a negative light.[31] Fourth, with only a few exceptions, the passion and resurrection predictions lack signs of possible theologizing by the early church.[32] For example, there is no reflection on the significance of Jesus' death, such as its

atoning value.[33] Fifth, Jesus' passion and resurrection predictions are often located within Jesus' reference to himself as the "Son of Man."[34] Given the criterion of dissimilarity, the "Son of Man" appears to have been an authentic self-designation by Jesus.[35] The "Son of Man" logia appear in every Gospel layer and in multiple literary forms.[36] However, the later church did not refer to Jesus as the "Son of Man." Sixth, the passion predictions fulfill the criterion of plausibility.[37] His prediction comes as no surprise within Jesus' Jewish context, given the fact that he had made enemies of prominent Jewish leaders, considered himself a prophet and would naturally share the fate of a prophet, given the Jewish traditions describing martyrdom and vindication by God (2 Macc. 7), and that John the Baptist had been recently executed for similar activities.[38]

Combined, these six arguments strongly suggest that Jesus predicted his violent and imminent death and subsequent resurrection. This creates a catch-22 for Muslims. If Jesus actually predicted his violent and imminent death and God rescued him from such a death, he is a false prophet, since his predictions failed to come true. But this would contradict the *Qur'an*, which refers to Jesus as a true prophet (2:87, 136, 253; 3:45; 4:171; 5:75; 57:27; 61:6). The other option is that Jesus died a violent and imminent death as he had predicted. But this, too, would contradict the *Qur'an*, which asserts that he was rescued from death in the first century (4:157-58). Either way, the *Qur'an* is wrong.

There are only a few means of possible escape for Muslim apologists. One is simply to deny that Jesus predicted his violent and imminent death. But those choosing this route must answer the six reasons provided above that form a strong case for the historicity of the passion predictions. A Muslim might also reply that a true prophet need not be 100 percent accurate in everything he or she says or thinks. After all, the Old Testament portrays Abraham as deceiving two kings by claiming that his wife Sarah was his sister while only shortly afterward God refers to him as a prophet (Gen. 20:2, 7). The actual test involves a prophet claiming to speak for God on a matter and he turns out being mistaken. In this case, he is a false prophet (Deut. 18:20-22). Muslims might argue that if Jesus did not actually teach but only shared that he *believed* he would die an imminent and violent death without knowing

God would rescue him, we would not regard him as a false prophet. In other words, if Jesus said, "I think I am going to die a violent death in the near future," that is entirely different than if he had said, "Thus says the Lord: I am going to die a violent death in the near future."

While this is a fair objection, it still fails. In Mark 8:31-33 (cf. Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22) and 9:31 (cf. Matt. 17:22-23), Jesus is reported to have *taught* his disciples that it was *necessary*, indeed, God's will, that he die an imminent and violent death. Elsewhere, Jesus states as fact that he will be killed soon (Mark 10:33-34; cf. Matt. 20:18-19; Mark 14:22-27; cf. Matt. 26:21-32; Luke 22:15-22; see also Luke 13:32-33), even appealing to divine Scriptures in support (Mark 14:27; Matt 26:31). His passion predictions were far more than his merely believing that he would die an imminent and violent death. Jesus taught that it must occur because it was the will of God in fulfillment of the divine Scriptures. Accordingly, Muslims are still caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place with nowhere to go.

What about the Gospel of Barnabas?

There are two extant manuscripts of GB.[39] The Italian is the oldest. Because it was introduced into Hofbibliothek in Vienna in 1738, it has a *terminus ad quem* of the early eighteenth century.[40] In addition to the Italian, there is a Spanish manuscript of GB that includes a note at the beginning with the claim that it was translated from Italian and a preface by Fra Marino asserting that, as a Catholic clergy, he had been given an unknown work against Paul by Irenaeus that "quoted extensively" from a *Gospel of Barnabas*.[41] Marino then claimed he had searched for GB and had discovered a copy of it in the office of Pope Sixtus V, which he stole while the Pope was sleeping.

The report of Fra Marino in the Spanish manuscript is shady. Not only has Irenaeus's alleged work against Paul never been found or mentioned otherwise, his extant works are quite the opposite of being anti-Pauline in character. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus refers to "the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul" (*AH* 3.3.2) and claims that the teachings of Paul, Peter, John, and the rest of the apostles are all in harmony (*AH* 3.21.3). Indeed, Irenaeus mentions Paul's teachings

many times and always employs them as though trustworthy. He only mentions Barnabas on seven occasions and *never* quotes from or even mentions a *Gospel of Barnabas* (*AH* 3.12.9, 14 [twice], 15 [twice]; 3.13.3; 3.14.1). Therefore, credulity reigns when Muslims accept the existence of an anti-Pauline work by Irenaeus, when such a work is based on a single medieval report, is otherwise never mentioned in ancient or medieval literature, has never been seen since, and clearly contradicts all of the works of Irenaeus that we have in our possession. One may wonder how a Muslim apologist unmoved by this observation would reply to a claim that a lost work of Bukhari had been discovered by a now deceased Imam who had showed it to no one but claimed that in it Bukhari frequently quoted a letter from Abu Bakr asserting that Muhammed had enlisted the services of a lettered relative who secretly composed the *Qur'an.*

The Gelasian Decree (AD 492-96) stated that GB had been falsely attributed to Barnabas. In the seventh century, the *List of Sixty Books* (Apocryphal Writings, #24) likewise mentions it along with the *Letter of Barnabas* (Apocryphal Writings, #18). Muslims rightly claim that this is proof that there was a GB in the fifth century that was not a Muslim forgery. While this is true of the GB mentioned by the Gelasian Decree and the *List of Sixty Books*, it is another matter of whether it is the same GB we have today. A number of data suggest it is not.

There are two prominent anachronisms in GB. In Leviticus 25:11, the year of Jubilee occurred every 50 years. Around AD 1300, Pope Boniface the Eighth decreed that the year of Jubilee would now be held at the turn of every century, which amounts to every 100 years. However, after Boniface died, Pope Clemens the Sixth returned the year of Jubilee to every 50 years in 1343. Therefore, it is of interest that GB 82 states that the year of Jubilee is every 100 years. This suggests that GB was probably written between AD 1300-1343. Another anachronism may be observed in GB 152 where wooden wine-casks are mentioned. These were common in medieval Europe and differed from the wineskins that were used in first century Palestine (Matt. 9:17).

GB appears to have been influenced by Dante's *Inferno*. GB 23 says of past prophets:

> Readily and with gladness they went to their death, so as not to offend against the law of God given by Moses his servant, and go and serve false and lying gods.

The expression "false and lying gods" is found on three other occasions in GB (78; 128; 217). Although the phrase does not appear in the Bible or the *Qur'an*, it is found in Dante's *Inferno* (1.72), an Italian book written in the early fourteenth century. It is noteworthy that the earliest known manuscript of GB is in Italian and the Spanish manuscript claims to be a translation of an Italian one.

Muslim apologists who are not dissuaded by multiple anachronisms and the appearance of influence from Dante's *Inferno* should note that GB quite clearly contradicts the *Qur'an*. GB 105 and 178 assert there are nine heavens, whereas *Qur'an* 2:29 states that God made seven. GB 3 asserts that Mary experienced no pain when giving birth to Jesus, whereas *Qur'an* 19:23 states that Mary experienced great pain during the event. GB 42 and 82 assert that Jesus is not Messiah. However, there are nine texts in the *Qur'an* referring to Jesus as Messiah (3:45; 4:157, 171, 172; 5:17, 72, 75; 9:30; 9:31). Of further interest is that while GB denies that Jesus is Messiah, it refers to him as "Christ" on three occasions in the Opening paragraph and once in GB 6. This is odd, since the word "Christ" was the Greek translation for "Messiah." This mistake is comical and one the real Barnabas of first century Palestine would not have made.[42]

Despite the fact that in GB it says that Jesus commands Peter, John, and others to be his witnesses throughout the world, that God had rescued Jesus, and that it was Judas who had been crucified (219-21), there is good evidence suggesting that Peter and John consistently preached the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. Not only is this the report of Acts (2:22-36; 3:11-26; 4:10; 5:27-32; 10:38-43) and the canonical Gospels connected with Peter (Mark) and John, Paul reported that his own message was in agreement with theirs (1 Cor. 15:11; Gal. 2:1-9). Also of interest are the statements of two of the apostolic fathers who are believed to have been disciples of Peter and John. It is probable that Clement of Rome was a disciple of Peter, and Polycarp was a disciple of John.[43] If Clement and Polycarp regarded Paul as having veered from true doctrine, we would expect to find

them chiding him in their letters. Instead, Clement places Paul on par with his mentor Peter and refers to both as "the greatest and most righteous pillars" (1 Clem. 5). Polycarp asserts that Paul "accurately and firmly" taught the word of truth" (Pol. *Phil.* 3:2). He also quotes from Ephesians twice and refers to it as part of the "sacred Scriptures" (Pol. *Phil.* 12:1). Clement and Polycarp also mention the death and resurrection of Jesus which GB denies (1 Clem. 42:3; Pol. *Phil.* 1:2; 2:1–2; 9:2; 12:2). Accordingly, the assertions of GB are no match for the abundance of historical evidence that Peter and John were preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus and that Paul propagated the same message.

What was GB? In 1999, two Christian scholars whose primary language is Arabic rewrote the *Qur'an*, replacing Islamic doctrine with Christian. They called the new book *The True Furqan.*[44] Christian scholars were not the first to make this sort of move. In 1979, Muslim scholar Ahmad Shafaat rewrote the canonical Gospels with a Muslim rather than Christian message and called it *The Gospel According to Islam.*[45] Aside from outright forgery, this appears to be what the author of GB was doing in the fourteenth century.

In short, there are no good reasons for regarding GB as authentic work of the apostle Barnabas. It contains anachronisms that suggest it was written in the first half of the fourteenth century, contradicts the *Qur'an* in a number of places, makes a linguistic blunder the historical Barnabas certainly would not have made, contradicts the strong evidence that the faithful apostles were preaching the message found in the NT literature, and has a shady history. The Muslim appeal to GB is thus far more naïve than the Christian citing of Mark 16:9-20 in support of Jesus' resurrection.

The Sign of Jonah

This leaves us with the Sign of Jonah. Analogies need not match in every point and rarely do. The Sign of Jonah certainly does not, since, unlike Jonah, Jesus was not placed out of commission as a result of disobedience to God. Moreover, a responsible hermeneutic interprets questionable texts in light of numerous clear ones. When

this is done, it is clear that Jesus' death is implied in the Sign of Jonah. Matthew, who reports the Sign of Jonah, has Jesus predicting his death at least on four other occasions (16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:61). Moreover, clear predictions of Jesus' death are reported five times by Mark (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 12:7-8; 14:8), all of which are reported by Matthew and all but one are reported by Luke.[46] Muslim apologists would have everyone reject all of the numerous other passion predictions that are strongly evidenced in favor of a prediction that is only clearly reported in a single Gospel that is not the earliest, and that does not necessarily contradict the other predictions.

Conclusion

Jesus' death and resurrection belong to the foundation of Christianity. Islam asserts that neither occurred. If Jesus did not die on a first century cross, Christianity is false and Islam has a chance of being correct. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, Christianity is true and Islam is false.

In spite of strong and abundant historical evidence for Jesus' first-century death by crucifixion, Islam offers three major arguments against it: the teachings of the *Qur'an*, GB, and a possible interpretation of the Sign of Jonah as it appears in Matthew's Gospel. However, all three arguments fail. This is devastating to Islam's claim to be the true religion of God, since if Jesus died by crucifixion, the *Qur'an* is mistaken. Because the mode of the divine inspiration of the *Qur'an* is one of dictation, if the *Qur'an* is mistaken it is not divinely inspired and the foundation of Islam crumbles.

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Notes

1. *Gospel of Barnabas*, 215-16.
2. Ibid., 217.
3. Ibid., 218.
4. Ibid., 219.
5. Ibid., 220, cf. 112.
6. Ibid., 221.
7. Ibid., 222; cf. Opening.
8. While the majority of scholars grant that Josephus mentions Jesus' death in the *Testimonium*, there is wide disagreement regarding the extent to which the original text has been altered. Although no formal research has determined the percentage of Josephus scholars who accept parts of the passage versus those who reject it in its entirety, Feldman is perhaps the most qualified to make an informed guess. In Feldman (1984), he lists eighty-seven scholarly treatments on the *Testimonium* during that period. In a personal e-mail correspondence to me on Nov. 26, 2001, Feldman admitted that his list for the period of 1937 to 1980 is incomplete and that much more on the passage has appeared since 1980. Asked to make a rough guess of where contemporary scholarship stands on the authenticity of the *Testimonium*, he responded, "My guess is that the ratio of those who in some manner accept the *Testimonium* would be at least 3

to 1. I would not be surprised if it would be as much as 5 to 1." Jewish scholar Vermes (2000) agrees: "declaring the whole notice a forgery would amount to throwing out the baby with the bath water. Indeed, in recent years most of the experts, including myself, have adopted a middle course, accepting that part of the account is authentic" (227). Dunn (2003) refers to a "broad consensus" that holds that the authentic Josephus version was a modified version of our extant texts (141). See also Evans (1992), 364.

9. Tacitus does not specifically name crucifixion as the mode of Jesus' execution but instead reports that Jesus suffered "the most extreme penalty" (*Annals* 15.44). Mara bar Serapion does not mention the mode of execution. Although of questionable historical value, the Talmud also reports the event but uses the term "hanged" (*b. Sanhedrin* 43a).
10. Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 11.
11. Mark 15:24-37; Matt. 27:35-50; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:16-37. Before the canonical Gospels were written, the death of Jesus is reported abundantly throughout the Pauline corpus and in all of Paul's undisputed letters except Philemon (Rom. 1:4; 4:24; 5:6, 8; 10; 6:3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10; 7:4; 8:11 [bis], 34; 10:9; 11:26; 14:9, 15; 1 Cor. 8:11; 15:3, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Gal. 1:1; 2:21; Phil. 2:8; 3:10, 18; Col. 1:18, 20; 2:12, 14, 20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:14; 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:8, 11. Crucifixion of Christ [crucifixion, cross]: 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 2:20; 3:1; 6:12, 14; Eph. 1:20; 2:16). We find Jesus' death also attested in Hebrews and 1 Peter (Heb. 2:9, 14; 9:15-10:14; 12:2; 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:3, 21; 2:24; 3:18). Both were certainly written in the first century and may pre-date the canonical Gospels (L. T. Johnson [1996], 151, 164).
12. Ign. *Eph.* 16:2; Ign. *Trall.* 9:1; Ign. *Rom.* 7:2; *Barn.* 7:9; 12:1; *Mart. Pol.* 17:2. The *Gospel of Peter* (10, 18) and the *Epistle of the Apostles* (9) report Jesus' death by crucifixion. The *Gospel According to the Hebrews* mentions Jesus' death by implication of his bodily resurrection. The *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Truth* likewise mention Jesus' death. Jesus' crucifixion—without mentioning whether he died—is mentioned in the *Gospel of the Savior* (91-92, 100-108). Jesus is crucified and dies in the *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* and *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, Gnostic writings dated to the third century. The *Gospel of Thomas* (65) and the *Gospel of Judas* (57) probably refer to the death of Jesus in *Thomas*'s version of Jesus' parable of the vineyard and the wicked tenants and *Judas*'s mentioning of Jesus' betrayal resulting in a sacrifice of Jesus' body. The fate of Jesus is neither mentioned nor alluded to in Egerton Papyrus 2, *Gospel of the Nazareans*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and *Gospel of the Egyptians*.
13. Miller (2008), 14.
14. 1 Cor. 15:1-11.
15. *Q* 14:27 and possibly *Q* 11:49-51 as indicated by the timing of "this generation" (Perkins [2007], 87; Smith [2003], 124).
16. Allison (2005), 233-34; Barnett (1999), 181; Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 454; Habermas (2003), 17; cf. Habermas (1996), 153; Koester (2000),

91; (1990), 6-7; Patterson (1994), 137, 138; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487; Wedderburn (1999), 113.

17. Barclay (1996), 16; Barnett (1994), 6; Burridge and Gould (2004), 46; Dunn (2003), 855; Engelbrecht (1989), 244; Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 466. Funk also stated that most of the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar believe the tradition predates Paul's conversion around AD 33 (454) (see also "Voting Records" [1994], 260, S6.); Grant (1977), 177; Hays (1997), 255; Koester (2000), 90; Lüdemann (2004), 31; Shanks and Witherington (2003), 109n3; Wedderburn (1999), 113. That it may be the oldest extant tradition, see Kendall (1988), 91; Lapide (2002, c. 1982), 98; Lindars (1986), 91; Patterson (1994), 136. See also Bauckham (2002), 259; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 71; Lüdemann (2004), 138.
18. Seven Brothers in 2 Macc. 7 (*d.* second century BC); Eleazar in 4 Macc. 6:1-30 (*d.* second century BC); Rabbi Akiba in Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 9, 7/8 [14b]; Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 61b (*d.* second century AD); Rabbi Hanina ben Taradion in Babylonian Talmud, *Abodah Zerah* 18a (*d.* second century AD). See also the Christian accounts of Stephen in Acts 6:8-7:60 (*d.* first century AD) and Polycarp in *Mart. Pol.* 7:1-16:1 (*d.* second century AD).
19. Feldman, "Introduction" in Feldman and Hata, eds. (1989), 42; Gundry (1993), 965-66; Keener (1999), 682; Vermes (2006), 122. Then Mark and Matthew report that Jesus cried out with a loud voice and died (Mark 15:37; Matthew 27:50). Matthew reports that Jesus cried out with a loud voice *again*, the former cry asking why he had been forsaken (27:46). Although Matthew does not report the content of his latter cry, we cannot know whether the cry was with or without specific words. It may also be noted that Jesus was defiant when brought before the Jewish leaders, implying that he will judge those who are now judging him (Mark 14:61-64; Matt. 26:63-66; Luke 22:66-69), which is similar to the defiance we observe with the Jewish martyrs. Reports by Luke and John are more like the Jewish martyrs with Luke reporting Jesus as saying, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46) and John reporting his utterance, "It is finished" (John 19:30).
20. Luke 23:34. Stephen does this as well (Acts 7:60).
21. A possible candidate for encomium is John 18:4-6. We may also note with Johnson (1996) that "In none of the canonical Gospels is the scandal of the cross removed in favor of the divine glory" such as is seen in the Gnostic Gospels (150).
22. McIntyre (2001), 8.
23. Lüdemann (2004), 50. See also Borg (2006), 271-72; Crossan (1991), 375; cf. 372; Crossan (1994), 145; Miller (2008), 14.
24. Vermes (2006), 9. Another Jewish scholar, Lapide (2002), claims that Jesus' death by crucifixion is "historically certain" (32).
25. Fredriksen (1999), 8. Moderate to somewhat conservative scholars likewise grant Jesus' death by crucifixion as historical. See R. Brown (*Death*, 1994): "most scholars accept the uniform testimony of the Gospels that Jesus died during the Judean prefecture of Pontius Pilate" (1373); Charlesworth (2008):

"Jesus died by Roman execution, decreed by the Roman prefect" (111); Ehrman (2000): "One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate" (162; cf. [2008], 235, 261-62); Johnson (1996): "The support for the mode of his death, its agents, and perhaps its co-agents, is overwhelming: Jesus faced a trial before his death, was condemned, and was executed by crucifixion" (125); Sanders (1985) includes Jesus' death by crucifixion outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities in his list of "almost indisputable facts . . . which can be known beyond doubt" (11).

26. Dunn (2003), 801.
27. Crossley (2005), 173; Habermas (2003), 92. According to McKnight (2005), there appears to be strong agreement that there are three primary passion predictions in the Synoptics. For a detailed comparison of these, see McKnight's chart (227).
28. Jesus' resurrection is implied since without a resurrection we must ask what is the sign to which Jesus refers. Moreover, Matthew earlier portrayed Jesus saying that his resurrection is the sign of Jonah. Robinson, Hoffman, and Kloppenborg (2002) recognize the presence of these sayings in Q, although they exclude the "sign of Jonah" portion since it is absent in Luke: Q 11:16, 29-30 (109); Q 12:[54-56] (127).
29. This does not apply to Jesus' predictions related to his resurrection.
30. Evans (1999), 88; Habermas (2003), 92; Vermes (2008), 82.
31. Maier (1997): "If the story of Holy Week were a pious invention of writers who wanted to portray a superhero, this scene would never have been included" (131).
32. In Mark 10:45 Jesus' death will serve as a ransom for many. At the Last Supper Jesus claims that his body and blood will be sacrificed on behalf of many and a new covenant will be instituted (Mark 14:22-24; Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20). In John 3:13-14, Jesus will be crucified so that others may have eternal life. In Luke 13:32-33, the "goal" of which Jesus speaks may be his death for others, given Luke 22:19-20.
33. McKnight (2005), 230; Theissen and Merz (1998), 429. Evans (1999), 88, and McKnight (2005), 232, note that the passion predictions likewise do not mention the Parousia and the coming of the Son of Man for judgment.
34. Habermas (2003), 92. Schaberg (1985) argues that Jesus' passion predictions where he refers to himself as the Son of Man in the Synoptics and the three Johannine predictions (3:13-14; 8:28; 12:31-34) are allusions to the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13.
35. Although many scholars grant that Jesus claimed to be the "Son of Man," further division exists pertaining to what Jesus meant by the term. Bock (2000, ©1998): "The 'Son of Man' [in Mark 14:61-64] is an otherwise, unidentified representative head . . . who shares God's authority, is a regal-like representative for the nation who is given judging authority and divine prerogative" (150; see 148-54); Dunn (2003) understands the term to mean "a man like me" in most of the occurrences while he grants "at least some reference to" the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13 (760);

Theissen and Merz (1998): "In our view the interpretation mentioned last is therefore the most probable one: Jesus spoke of both the present and the future Son of Man. He combined the expression 'son of man' from everyday language with the visionary-language tradition of a heavenly being 'like a son of man'. . . . He is at the same time the present and the future 'man'. This 'double' concept of Son of Man is analogous to the 'double' kingdom of God eschatology" (552). Hurtado (2003) denies that Jesus made claims to being the Son of Man. Instead, it was the first "bilingual circles of Jesus' followers to serve as his distinctive self-referential expression in conveying his sayings in Greek" (304). According to Hurtado, the purpose of this expression was "to identify and distinguish a person" and "[refer] to him emphatically as human descendant" (305). We might use an American idiom for Hurtado's bilingual group who were saying of Jesus, "You da man!"

36. Bock (2000, ©1998) notes that the title "Son of Man" is applied to Jesus 82 times in the Gospels, 81 of which come from the lips of Jesus (John 12:34, in which Jesus' critics quote his words back to him and ask who was the "Son of Man," is the lone exception). Taking parallels into consideration, there are 51 logia of which 14 appear in Mark and 10 in Q. There are four occurrences in the NT outside of the Gospels: Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6; Rev. 1:13; 14:14. (Also see Dunn [2003], 737.) The term is rare in the writings of the early church (225). Bock goes on to demonstrate that even the *apocalyptic Son of Man* logia are multiply attested in Mark, Q, M, and L. (We may add John [5:27; 9:35-36; 12:23] and that these logia appear in multiple literary forms: parabolic, apocalyptic, didactic.) "If the criterion of multiple attestation means anything or has any useful purpose, then the idea that Jesus spoke of himself in these terms should not be doubted" (226). Theissen and Merz (1998): "It is certain that Jesus used the expression 'son of man'. It derives from Aramaic and is attested in all the complexes of the Jesus tradition (Mark; Q; Matt, cf. 10.23; 25.31ff./ Luke, cf. e.g. 18.8; John; Gospel of Thomas 86)" (548); Dunn (2003): The Son of Man phrase "*was remembered as a speech usage distinctive of Jesus because that is precisely what it was*. It was Jesus who, if we may put it so, introduced 'the son of man' phrase into the Jesus tradition. The evidence could hardly point more plainly to that conclusion" (738, emphasis in original; cf. 759).
37. Please note that this observation only applies to Jesus' prediction pertaining to his death. His predictions that he would resurrect shortly after his death do not fulfill this criterion.
38. R. Brown (1994), 2:1486; Crossan (1991), 352; Crossley (2005), 173; Dunn (2003), 797, 805; Evans (1999), 94; McKnight (2005), 231; Theissen and Merz (1998), 429; Turner (2000), 16-17. McKnight (2005) asserts, "The logic is simple and unavoidable: if Jesus called his disciples to a willing martyrdom, for which there is plenty of evidence (Q 12:4–9; 14:27; 17:33), we can infer with the utmost probability that he, too, saw his own death approaching" (155). Evans (1999), however, cautions: "The rhetoric of such a summons may have been

intended to underscore the dangers and difficulties that lay ahead; not necessarily the certainty of Jesus' death, or of the death of any of his followers" (89).

39. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg also mention a Greek fragment of GB (xvi). My English translation is as follows: "Barnabas the apostle said [that] in evil contests [or conflicts] the victor is the more morally wretched because he leaves having greater sin." Nothing even close to this statement appears in GB.
40. Ibid., xvi.
41. Ibid., xv.
42. The early Church loved Barnabas. Some of the churches regarded the *Letter of Barnabas* to be canonical and many of those that did not still valued it highly. There is not enough data to render a conclusion pertaining to whether the letter and Gospel attributed to Barnabas and known by the *List of Sixty Books* were written by the same author. However, it is clear that the GB in our possession today and the *Letter of Barnabas* were not composed by the same person. In agreement with Genesis, the *Letter of Barnabas* presents Isaac, rather than Ishmael, as the preferred son (6:8; 7:3; 8:4; 13:3ff.). Whereas GB denies that Jesus is the Son of God, the *Letter of Barnabas* refers to Jesus as the "Son of God"—and more. In *Letter of Barnabas*, Jesus is referred to as the "Son of God" (5:9, 11; 7:2, 9 [in 7:9, Jesus himself claimed he was the Son of God]; 12:1-11), "Christ" (12:10-11), "Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1; 2:6), and "Lord" (5:5 [Lord of the whole world]; 7:2; 12:10-11). Jesus participated with God in creating humans according to the image that both he and God shared (5:5; cf. 6:12). Jesus suffered for us/our sins, was crucified, and died (5:1-2 [in fulfillment of Scripture], 5-6, 12-14 [in fulfillment of Scripture]; 6:7; 7:2-3, 9; 12:1-10 [as was predicted]; 14:4-5). Jesus was resurrected (5:6; 15:9). These teachings in the *Letter of Barnabas* are in stark contradiction to the teachings in GB, indicating that they do not share a common author. The teachings in the former are far more in line with what we find in the NT literature. Muslims must answer why GB should be regarded as authentic while rejecting the authenticity of the *Letter of Barnabas*.
43. See Habermas and Licona (2004), 53-55.
44. *The True Furqan* (Duncanville, TX: World Wide Publishing, 1999).
45. Shafaat (1979).
46. To go a little further with possible Muslim replies, see Licona (2006), 65-66.

Resources for Discovering the Literacy, Conceptual, and Historical Context of the OT

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Archaeological endeavors in the Middle East go as far back as Napoleon's ventures into Egypt (1798), where he took with him a team of specialists to record its ancient wonders and marvels. The Rosetta Stone (1799) was discovered; the study of its three languages provided an unexpected key to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics by Thomas Young (1819) and Jean-Francois Champollion (1822). When this success was reported, it stirred new interest in the ancient world. In fact, it opened a veritable floodgate of interest into the wonders of the Ancient Near East (ANE) and, especially, into the light those wonders might shed upon the best known and greatest religious, literary, and historical production of the ANE—the Bible. The ancient Akkadian Semitic language was soon deciphered (Rawlinson, 1845) using the Behistun Inscription (518 B. C.) that was, interestingly, also inscribed in three languages. Other ancient languages were also soon deciphered.

After that, "biblical archaeology," a subset of Syria-Palestinian archaeology, soon prospered and drew worldwide attention. Archaeologists, scholars, and treasure hunters were amazed at the discovery of creation stories, flood stories, legal documents, law codes, ancient civilizations (e.g., Hittites) and additional languages, religious and theological epics and rituals, sacrificial rituals, plans for tabernacles, plans for temples, palaces, wisdom literature, covenants and covenantal

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forms, war stories and manuals of religions, birth stories of famous kings, king lists, pagan prophetic activity, annalistic literature, omen literature, and much more. These massive and revealing discoveries have over the decades pulled back the curtain of antiquity and revealed the ANE world of the Old Testament. These texts and artifacts have helped shape and set the agenda for the study and understanding of the Old Testament.

Since the Old Testament is an ANE monumental document itself—an ANE book and artifact—this is not really surprising. The growth of archaeological methodology has been slow, and the placing of the ANE discoveries into distinct archaeological eras has been laborious. The results have influenced biblical studies and have led to a better understanding of the biblical texts and their world. Although these divisions are constantly under further refinement, some key eras have been labeled: the *Bronze Age* (Early Bronze, 3200-2200 B.C.; Middle Bronze, 2200-1550 B. C.; Late Bronze 1550-1200 B.C.), *Iron Age* (roughly 1200–586 B.C.), *Persian Age* (538–332 B.C.), *Greek (Hellenistic) Age* (332-68 B.C.), and *Roman Era* (68 B.C.). Many of the major texts and artifacts that have been discovered and that touch upon the Old Testament in some significant way are listed in the chart below. Most of these items are texts, but even texts must be interpreted, to say nothing of the challenge of interpreting a mute artifact. In the list below, canonical compositions, monumental inscriptions, and archival documents are included.

The methods, perspectives, and approaches employed to do archaeology have made significant progress over the past two centuries. The scientific study of ancient "tells" (mounds of dirt and cultural debris compacted together to form strata over the centuries and millennia that witness to the various times when these tells were occupied by humans) began with W. F. Flinders Petrie (1890) in Palestine when he adopted and used methods H. Schliemann had used at ancient Troy in modern day Turkey. According to this approach, the various strata or layers of occupation of a tell are unearthed, analyzed, placed in a broad context and interpreted.

From Petrie's day to about 1950 archaeology in Palestine flourished. "Treasure hunting" was now over and appropriate goals, concerns and scientific techniques, tools, purposes, skilled experts,

and improved record keeping developed. From 1950 until today an architectural approach and method pioneered by Wheeler-Kenyon (the extensive use of case balks) continued to evolve. Today a combination of these methods is usually employed. But, more than ever, multicultural and interdisciplinary activities are plugged into these basic methodologies. Scholars from many disciplines now take part in an archaeological expedition (paleographers, linguists, osteologists, geologists, zoologists, pottery experts, surveyors, satellite technology, technical dating devices, etc.), and archaeological teams are often international in flavor. More recently "surface surveying" examines whole regions; these surface surveys have proven quite productive, and large areas of Syria-Palestine have been covered with good results that help indicate where more detailed excavations would be most fruitful.

Archaeology at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is enjoying, but is also frustrated by, a huge information explosion of both artifacts and texts. These artifacts and texts must be deciphered and interpreted by persons living in our era and competent to exercise judgment in doing so. Every item must be placed into its larger Syria-Palestinian context and, for biblical studies, must be cautiously placed in a proper relationship to relevant biblical materials. Properly identified and interpreted archaeological materials may *illustrate, illuminate, demonstrate, and (sometimes at some level) confirm or challenge* certain aspects of a biblical text and its worldview. And, it remains humbling to realize that the context of a given text or artifact may never be totally available to us. Moreover, usually these same texts or artifacts cannot be used at a theological level to "prove" the specific religious/theological claims of a biblical text, but may surround a particular text with a supportive world that illuminates and suggests strongly the veracity, historically and theologically, of the text in question. These materials can make plausible and confirm certain historical perspectives and claims of biblical texts.

The following list is not complete, and there is no other way to experience these texts except to read them. All the texts listed below are available in English translation and reading them begins to open up a window of perception that illuminates and illustrates many of the texts of the Old Testament. On the literary level alone, these texts illustrate the multiplicity of literary genres through which the Old

Testament world is richly and effusively presented. On the other hand, an encounter with these texts also, just as helpfully, reveals the contrasts that the documents of the Old Testament exhibit when set against their ANE counterparts, both in thought and in form and style.

(See table on the following pages.)

Key Ancient Archaeological Texts and Artifacts
Relating to the Old Testament

Title/Topic	Date Found/ Published	Date of Artifact	Provenance	Description	Ancient Sources (English Translation)	OT References
Enuma Elish	1848-76	Ca. 1000 B.C.	Nineveh, Ashur, Kish	Akkadian: Hymn: cosmology, Marduk, creation, ordering of creation, humans created.	COS 1.111; ANET, 60-72, 501-3; RANE #6	Gen. 1-2
Gilgamish Epic	1872; 1930, 1933	1900 B.C.	Sumer, Babylon	Sumerian; Akkadian: flood, death, divine/ human, Utnapishtim, search for life, Babylonian Noah.	COS 1.132; DBA ANET, 72-98 OTP, **11-20;** RANE 66-70	Gen. 3, 6-9. Noah, Ark
Sumerian King Lists	1923	Ca. 18th Cent. B. C.	Sumer	Sumerian: Kingship from the gods; Kings before flood, long life spans; illustrates literary structure of O. T.	ANET, 265-66 RANE, #45 ROT, 423, 441-47 OTP, **21-32**	Gen. 5; Gen. 1-11; cf. kingship in Deut., 1 Sam. 8, 12
Hymn to Enlil	1959	2000-1595 B. C.	Nippur	Sumerian: A powerful hymn to the god over the gods, Enlil, in Nippur, in the temple Ekur. He is praised as the shepherd and keeper of all mankind, all things. The gods cannot look upon him.	ANET, 573-76 Cf. RANE, #74	Illustrates the praise given to gods; cf. various Pss in OT
Hymn to Shamash	1889, 1901	Late 2d Millennium B. C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Hymns that praise the sun god, Shamash, who is the keeper of justice, including just weights and measures.	COS 1.117 RANE, #75 ANET, 387-89	OT concern for justice, just business dealings; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 25-13-16

Memphite Creation	Ca. 1830	2700 B.C.	Memphis, Egypt	Egyptian: Creation by heart/tongue, creation spoken into creation through senses; god Ptah.	COS 1.15; RANE 62-65 ANET, 4-6 OTP, **3-6**	Gen. 1-2
Ra and The Serpent	1936	2400 B.C.	Thebes, Egypt	Egyptian: Pictures the Sun and a Serpent in opposition to each other; Ra creates in communion with his heart and humans come from his tears; serpent goes on its belly.	OTP, 28-31 ANET, 6-7 COS 1.9; 1.21	Gen. 1:1-2:4a Gen. 3
Seven Year Famines (Famine Stele)		2700 B.C. (text: Ptolemaic Era)	Sehel Island	Egyptian: 7 years of famine motif; theological issues between Pharaoh/god involved; tradition is found elsewhere as well.	ANET, 31-2 COS 1.53	Gen. 12;41
Beni Hassan	1902-1904	2000 B.C	Beni Hassan, Egypt	Picture: Presents a group of 37 people coming to Egypt from Palestine to sell eye paint. Helps recreate, illustrate, and illuminate the world of patriarchs. Some suggest patriarchal culture and dress is well illustrated here.	AOT, 94	Possible culture, lives, appearance of patriarchs Gen. 12-50
Tale of Two Brothers	1855	1225 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Brother rejects advances of sister-in-law.	ANET, 23-25 COS 1.40	Gen. 39; Joseph
Dream Interpretation	1935	1300 B. C. (or much earlier, 2000 B. C.)	Thebes	Egyptian: A short list of how to interpret a dream that concerns oneself in a dream.	ANET, 495 COS 1.33	Gen. 40-41 and Joseph's dream interpretations

Dream Omens/ Oracles	1954 1850 1871	Ca. 1350 B.C. Ca. 1050 B.C. 648 B. C.	Ugarit Cairo Ashur	Ugaritic: Seems to attempt to conceive the world in terms of dreams. Egyptian: A dream sent from a god reveals to Thutmose IV that he will be king if he removes sand from Sphinx. Akkadian: A seer's dream/vision reveals to Ashurbanipal that as king Ishtar would favor him and give him success in war and politics.	COS 1.93 ANET, 449 ANET, 451	Shows the importance of dreams in the ANE and in the OT: prophets, revelation
Gudea Temple Instructions	1877, 1900	Late 3d Millennium B.C.	Sumer	Sumerian: Two cylinders give the dream conditions under which Gudea received a command and instructions to build a temple for his god Ningirsu of Lagash. It is an extensive temple building document.	COS 2.155 ANET, 268-9 ANETOT, 63	Cf. 2 Sam. 7-8; 1 Kgs. 6 and also the instructions for the Tabernacle in Exod. 25-31, 35-40
Sargon Legend		3d Millennium B. C.	Sumer	Akkadian: Sargon I, rescued from river in a reed basket; certain other comparisons and contrasts to Moses' birth and rescue.	COS 1.133; RANE 75-6 OTP, 55-8 ANET, 119	Exod. 2
Construction of New Temple	1906	13th Century B.C.	Hattusus	Hittite: A record describing the construction of a new temple setting for a goddess.	COS 1.70	Cf. construction of Tabernacle and Temple in OT (Exod., 1 Kgs., Ezra)
Rituals Against Reptiles	1929-37	1350 B. C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Records requests to 12 gods to render serpent's venom powerless, but only the final 12th ritual is effective.	COS 1.94	Various refs. to serpents in OT, but note Num. 21:4-9; Deut. 32:33
Hittite Treaties	1903-10	1400-1200 B.C.	Anatolia; Hattusus (Turkey)	Hittite: Illustrates covenantal forms evidenced in covenants of ANE and OT. Rameses II & Hattusilus III's covenant is a good example out of many (30+).	ANET, 199-206, 529-41; 659-61 COS 2.17-8; 2.82; 2.127-9; RANE 97-100 OTP, 49-54	Deut., Josh. 24; Exod. 19-24

Laws of Hammurabi	1901	1750 B.C. (and earlier)	Susa	Akkadian: ANE laws that parallel (contrast & compare) Mosaic Laws; includes prologue and epilogue.	ANET, 163-79 OTP, 62-7; RANE 111-14 COS 2.131	Deut. 12-26 Exod. 20-24 Lev. 16-26, etc.
Merneptah Stele	1896	1209 B.C.	Thebes, Egypt	Egyptian: 1st mention of Israel outside of OT. Pharoah Merneptah; huge monument recording massive campaigns of this Pharaoh.	ANET, 376-78 OTP, 81-4 Cos 2.6 RANE #50	Joshua; entrance into Canaan (ca. 1400/1200 B.C.)
Herem: A Thing Devoted	1906	13th Century B. C.	Hattusus	Hittite: Records installation of Storm god and things and persons "devoted" to him for destruction/use. Mesha Inscription describes Mesha's devotion of Nebo to his god Chemosh for destruction.	COS 1.72 Cf. Stele of Mesha, Moabite Stone below and entries there; also found at Mari	Similar to the "herem" or ban in Joshua of the cities/peoples "devoted to the Lord"
Hittite Laws	Ca. 1893	1650-1200 B.C.	Hattusus	Hittite: Laws that compare/contrast to OT laws; contain casuistic laws arranged by topics; scapegoat laws and levirate laws present.	OTP, 70-2 ANET, 188-196 COS 2.19 RANE 115-16	Exod. 19-24; Deut. 12-26 Lev. 17-26, etc.
Urim and Thummin	1906	1250-1200 B.C.	Hattusus	Hittite: Omen text relating the use of extipicy/bird omens to discover the god's will using a "favorable/unfavorable" options scheme.	COS 1.78	Use of Urim and Thummin, Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; Ezra 2.63; Neh. 7:65
Urim and Thummin	1992	650 B. C. 833, 823 B.C.	Assur, Assyria	Akkadian: First text describes a divination process using two stones, one white, one black. Second text describes use of lots to choose a limmu leader in Assyria.	COS 1.127 COS 2.1130	Use of Urim and Thummin, Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; Ezra 2.63; Neh. 7:65; Esth. 3:7

Urim and Thummin		Ca. 1287	Egypt	Egyptian: During the time of Rameses II, this text describes how a god could indicate his desire by a visible sign, yes/no.	ANET, 448	Use of Urim and Thummin, Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; Ezra 2.63; Neh. 7:65
Story of Aqhat	1929-37	1350 B.C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Illustrates Canaanite literature, poetry, gods, religion, importance of royal heir; mentions Noah, Job, Danel.	OTP, 85-94 ANET, 149-55 COS 1.103 RANE #19	Judg.; pre-Israel cultural and religious aspects of Canaan; patriarchal need for heirs; Daniel in Ezek. 4; 14; 28; Dan. 1-12
Gezer Alphabet/ Calendar	1908	900 B.C.	Gezer	Canaanite (old Hebrew): Oldest example and illustrates writing, letters of that era; agricultural cycles.	OTP, 104-8 ANET, 320 COS 2.85 RANE 171	Agricultural picture of OT is helpful; linguistic data helpful
Travels of Sinuhe	1916	1800-1000 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: This narrative includes descriptions of Canaan and Syria and the people; it is considered a novella by many; promotes Egyptian life; shows an Egyptian "in exile" in Canaan.	ANET, 18-22 COS 1.38 OTP, *129-33* RANE 76-82	Gen. 12-50; Joseph esp. Literary, cultural insights
Travels of Wenamun	1899	1090 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Travels of Wenamun includes descriptions of Canaan and insights into culture, religion, prophets; some burial customs; caution is needed since it is semi-fictional.	ANET, 25-9 COS 1.41 OTP, *323-30* RANE #83	Gen. 34; general cultural milieu in certain sections of patriarchal narratives
Shoshenk I, Inscription	1825	920 B.C.	Egypt, Karnak Temple	Egyptian: Shoshenk (Shishak) raids/ invades/quells Palestine, removes wealth from Jerusalem; provides lists of cities in this area, including Israelite cities.	ANET, 242-43, ROT, 63-4 AOT, 300-2 ATSHB, 390	1 Kgs. 11:40; 14:25-28

Stele of Mesha, King of Moab Moabite Stone	1868	850 B.C.	Dibon, Moab	Moabite: Omri, Ahab, and King Mesha listed, house of David (possible); national theology of Moab toward their god Chemosh is set forth to compare/contrast to Israel's; use of "devoted to destruction" (cherem) is present.	ANET, 320-1 COS 2.23 OTP, 157-9 RANE #51; ROT, 92-3	Deut. 7:26; Josh. "cherem" 6:17, 40; 1 Kgs. 11:44 (16:21-28)-2 Kgs. (3:4) 25:30
Black Obelisk	1846	827 B.C.	Calah, Assyria	Akkadian: Describes successer of Shalmaneser III; Jehu, Ahab involved; Jehu (or envoy) pays tribute to Shalmaneser.	OTP, 122-24 COS 2.113f ANET, 281 RANE #4	1 Kgs. 19:16; 2 Kgs. 8:7-15; 9:1-13; 10:31-36
Annals of Sargon II	1843-54	Ca. 722 B.C.	Khorsabad, Assyria	Akkadian: Sargon II conquers Samaria; takes 27,290 prisoners and many chariots; deported Israelites.	OTP, 127-29 RANE #42 ANET, 284-87 COS 2.118	2 Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:11
Siloam Inscription	1880	701 B.C.	Jerusalem	Hebrew: Describes completion of Hezekiah's tunnel; incidentally records the earliest use of matres lectionis in Hebrew.	OTP, 130-1 RANE, 171-2 ANET, 321 COS 2.28	2 Kgs. 20:20 2 Chr. 32:30
Sennacherib Prism	1830	701 B.C.	Nineveh	Akkadian: Describes Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem and raiding of 46 other cities.	ANET, 287-88 COS 2.119b OTP, 139-40 RANE, #43	2 Kgs. 18-20 Isa. 36:1-39:8
Lachish Ostraca	1935 1938	589-586 B.C.	Tell ed Duwer/ Lachish	Hebrew: Over 19 letters describe the plight of those under siege by Assyrians and also give glimpses of royal military administration and personal issues; reading is evidenced as a skill and a portion of a prophet's name may refer to Jeremiah.	ANET, 321-22 COS 3.42 a-f OTP, 134-36 RANE #56 ATSHB, 460	1 Kgs. 17:19; 19:7 Jer. 26:20-22; 34:6-7 Language and literary issues are gleaned from these meager documents

Kuntillet Ajrud Texts (Graffiti)	1975-76	9th-8th Century B.C.	Northwest Sinai	Hebrew, Phoenecian: Texts illustrate well the syncretism and trafficking in strange gods that the prophets of Israel railed against; graffiti-like figures of the Egyptian God Bes on jars; Yahweh name with "his" consort mentioned.	ROT, 413-15, 588-89 IR, 283-89	Illuminates the mixed nature of the religion of certain Israelites' beliefs in the OT; Yahweh/Baal identity seems likely; influence of Asherah in OT illuminated
Baruch's Seal	1975	Ca. 600 B.C.	Jerusalem	A clay seal found with Baruch's name; other seals (bulla) bear names found in Jeremiah.	AOT, 364	Jer. 36; 40
Babylonian Chronicles	1887	745-to late Seleucid era B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Yearly records covering reign of Nabopolassar and first 13 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign: deportation of Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. Certain years of the chronicle are especially helpful: 727, 722, 681, 605, 598/97, and 539. Cyrus' conquest of Babylon is recorded.	ANET, 301-7; 563-4 COS 1.137 OTP, 182-4 RANE #49	1 Kgs. 2:10; 11:43 2 Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:8-12; 19:37; 20:12; 24:1-7, 10-17: Jer. 37:1: Dan. 5:30; 6:28
Nabonidas and His God	1956	556-539 B.C.	Harran	Akkadian: Depicts the last Babylonian king in his "apostasy" worshipping the moon god Sin.	ANET, 312-14; 562-3 COS 1.89	General background of Babylonian period: Daniel's exile, 4; Dan. 5, Belshazzar
Babylonian Administrative Document	1938	595-568 B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian (cf. Chronicles above): Certain documents describe the good fortune of Jehoiachin, exiled king of Judah, and his recognition at the court of Evil-Merodach, Babylonian king in 561 B.C. along with several other persons.	ANET, 308 ATSHB, 378-9	2 Kgs. 25:27-30
Nabonidus' Recognition of Sin as Supreme God	1976	6th Century B. C.	Ur, Ziggurat of Ur	Akkadian: Records Nabonidus' rebuilding of Zizzurat of Ur and his recognition of Sin ("gods") as god of gods, which demotes Marduk. Belshazzar, his son, is mentioned.	COS 2.123B	Background of pre-exilic period in Babylon; Dan. 5

Nabonidus Chronicle	1882	556-539 B. C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Relates the stay of Nabonidus, last king of Babylon, in Tema and his final return to Babylon; fall of Babylon; fate of Nabonidus.	ANET, 305-7 COS 1.89 (cf.)	Dan. 5 Belshazzar; background for Daniel and Babylonian era
Cyrus Cylinder	1879	518 B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: Records conquest of city of Babylon 586/7 B.C. and gives his theological explanation of the events. His policies allowed Jews and all other conquered peoples to return to their homelands and rebuild temples and worship.	ANET, 315-16 COS 2.124 OTP, 193-95 RANE #44	Dan. 5:30; 6:28 II Chron. 36:22-23 Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-15 Isa. 44:26-8
Elephantine Papyri	1907	5th Century B.C.	Elephantine, Egypt	Aramaic: Describes religious, everyday, and political life among Jews who fled to Egypt after fall of Jerusalem. Communication with Jews in Samaria and Judah. Temple in Egypt built/demolished. Dream report is recorded on an ostracon.	ANET, 222, 491, 548-9 COS 3.51; 3.52; 3.53;3.68, 3.88	cf. Ezra, Neh., Hag., cf. Daniel 2; 4; 7:28; 10; Jer. 42-44
Dead Sea Scrolls	1947	3d Century B.C.-1st Century A.D.	Northwest corner of Dead Sea	Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek: Some of oldest copies of OT mss and many extra-canonical documents; documents help us understand the state of OT mss in this era and the social-religious structures of this era.	*Dead Sea Scroll Bible;* The Dead Sea Scrolls in translation, Vermes, etc.	Insights into various ways this group interpreted the biblical texts for their era; linguistic insights
The Shipwrecked Sailor	1927	2040-1640 B. C.	Egypt (original provenance unknown)	Middle Egyptian: Narrates a story of a sailor's misfortune but eventual recovery and deliverance; fictional elements illustrate a moral to follow.	COS 1.39 AEL, 1:211-14 ATSHB, 257-8	Narrative style and beauty; literary devices, features of OT world
Balaam Inscription	1967	700 B.C.	Deir 'Alla, Jordan	Dialect of Aramaic: The name Balaam, a "good prophet" in this text, recalls the Balaam of the OT. He also dies as a result of his actions as does Balaam in OT. Theological issues in general are raised.	COS 2.27 OTP, *124-6* RANE, #91	Lamentations Num. 22-24; 26; Gen. 6-8

Annals and Stele of Thutmose III	1940	1468 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Describes his siege of Megiddo and other battles in Palestine using an Egyptian daybook scribal tradition. Divine intervention by god Ashur using a "star" or "light" is recorded.	ANET, 234-41 COS 2.2A, 2.2B OTP, **142-45** ROT, 175, 541-42	OT battle reports: Sam – Kgs; Josh. 1-6, 7-11; esp. 10:28-42; 11:10-14
Battle of Qadesh; Annals of Rameses II	1928, 1935	1275 B.C.	Egypt: On major temples in Egypt and Nubia	Egyptian: Description of the Battle of Qadesh in Syria; some find early "deuteronomistic" type theology in Rameses's attitude and actions toward his god, Amun. Use of numbers: millions, hundreds of thousands, etc. and idioms like a "locust-swarm" in number are informative.	COS 2.5 ROT, 255-56 ANET, 255	General background of divine intervention in war; deuteronomistic theology; hyperbolic use of numbers
Annals of Rameses III	Ca. 1800	Ca. 1200 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Describes battle(s) of Rameses III with the Sea Peoples including the future Philistines.	ANET, 262-3 OTP, **151-54** ROT, 140-43; 535-6	Judg. 13:1-16:31; 1-2 Sam, Samuel/David stories
Weidner Chronicle	1926	Late 2d Millennium	Ashur and Sippar	Akkadian: A "theology of history" is embedded in these texts from Mesopotamia. The Marduk Temple and Babylon and their treatment is the key to historical success. Many see its historiography similar to the books of Josh.-2 Kgs.	COS 1.138 RANE #47	Evaluation of kings in OT historiography of Israel and ANE: Kings, Chronicles
Limmu (official) list Assyrian Eponym Canon	1941	910-612 B.C.	Assyria	Akkadian: A list across 300 years that records a selected official for each year. Both relative and absolute chronology (763 B.C. eclipse) are made possible with this list.	ANET, 274 COS 2.1131	OT dating by correlation: kings, events, etc.
Annals of Shalmaneser III	1846, 1861	Ca. 850-824 B. C.	Ashur	Akkadian: Describes the incursions of Shalmaneser III into Syria-Palestine. Ahab of Israel and Hadadezer of Syria are mentioned.	ANET, 276-81 COS 2.113A-H OTP, **176-81**	1 Kgs. 16::29-22 2 Kgs. 9:1-10:33

Annals of Sargon II	1843, 1852-4	721-706 B. C.	Khorsabad	Akkadian: These are illustrative of annalistic records kept by the Assyrian kings; the mention of broken treaties, idols and their indwelling gods, eunuchs, and tribute picture the political/religious inner-workings of the historical/religious thinking of those eras.	COS 2.118A ANET, 284-87 OTP 127-9 RANE #42	General historiography; 2 Kgs. 17:1-24; 18:1-2; Isa. 10:27-32; 14:4b-21; 20:1
Annals of Tiglath-Pileser IV (Pul)	1906-7	744-727 B.C.	Calah (Nimrud), Assyria	Akkadian: Records 17 years of this king's reign who founded the Neo-Assyrian Empire. His encounters with Israel are significant.	COS 2.117 ANET, 282-4 OTP, 125-6 RANE #41	Kings: Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea, 2 Kgs. 15-16; Isa. 7: 8:1-10; 2 Chr. 28:16-21; etc.
Mari	1933	18th Century B.C.	Mari (Tell Hariri) on Middle Euphrates River	Akkadian: Correspondence between famous kings: Zimri-Lim and Babylon; Habiru noted; conditions during patriarchal eras probably reflected. Prophetic texts and activity. Religious perspectives revealed. Includes female prophetesses. Contain various genres of archival materials; concept of herem is mentioned.	OTP, *318-22* ANETOT, 78 RANE #79 ANET, 482-3, 623-26	Sets forth a context for Israels' prophets for contrast, comparison overall. Terms for prophets are helpful; several other general concepts, such as herem
Emar	1972-76, 78	1550-1200 B.C	Emar on Euphrates River	Akkadian: Especially important for its ritual and religious texts. Legal texts are present. The *Zukru Festival* marking new beginnings for the year is especially important for a Syrian perspective on such a festival. Also kissu festivals are recorded for recognition of god(s).	COS 1.123; 1.126; 2.137 IR, 114-123	Especially: Lev. 8:30; 23; Num. 28-29; Deut. 16; 31; 32 Nabu, = OT term for prophet; cf. Passover, Unleavened Bread

Nuzi Tablets	1925-31	15th Century B.C.	Nuzi	Hurrian (dialect of Akkadian): Texts describe various social, religious, legal customs on familial and political levels. Often private documents. Private family pictures of Hurrians in Mitanni. Reflects practices from before *and* after the 15th century.	ANET, 219-20 COS 3.121 AOT, 102-3 RANE #14.	Provides a large backdrop for OT. Baal references and cult. Also Elijah, Elisha cycles.
Ugarit (Ras Shamra)	1929-37	15th Century B. C.	Ugarit	Ugaritic: Hundreds of tablets that help understand the religious milieu there and perhaps in Canaan. The Baal Cycle, Tale of Aqhat, Tale of Kirtu, are key religious texts, but many other texts are relevant: sacrifice, cult, ritual, mythology, pantheons, royal roles, tabernacle, culture—all these and more are included.	COS 1.88; 1.104 IR, 95-6; 97, 98-109, 204-5, 164-5, 156-7, 228, 328-9 OTP, **263-74**	Provides a broad window for OT pagan religious practices: Baal refs. and cult; Elijah and Elisha cycles; literary significance; Baal/ Yahweh contrasts and comparisons are helpful
Amarna Letters and Tell El-Amarna Tablets	1887	1550 - 1150 B.C.	Tell-el-Amarna	Akkadian: Letters (540) from kings in Palestine seeking help from Pharaoh Akhenaton against enemies & from Amenophis III. Habiru appear. Includes Canaanite words and phrases. "God of my father" mentioned in one text.	OTP, 77-80 IR, 94-5 TSB, Excursus 7.1 RANE 166-68	Reflect conditions in Canaan before or during Israel's arrival in Joshua & Judges. "God of my father" text
Ebla Archives	1968, 1974-76	Ca. 2500 B.C.	Ebla, Syria	Sumerian, Eblaite: A huge cache of texts that picture an important part of the pre-patriarchal biblical world in many areas of culture and history. "God of fathers" noted, various gods, some family deities.	OTP, *240-3* IR, 82-3, 148	Reflects larger world of Middle East in pre-patriarchal eras Gods of OT tied to Ebla gods is possible. Designation Nabi'utum, "prophet" attested.

Instructions of Ptah Hotep	1900	Ca. 2500 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Gives the wisdom of one of Egypt's greatest wise men, who teaches his son using metaphor/analogy on how to succeed in life and vocation.	OTP, **283-88** ANET, 412-14 ATSHB, 67 RANE 182-4	Parallels in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes; esp. Prov. 2, 6, 23, 25, 26
Atrahasis Epic	1880	18th Cent. B.C.	Assyria	(Sumerian: original) Akkadian: Creation in place, multiplication of life, flood. Humans created to serve in hard labor for gods. God sends flood to wipe out a noisome humanity. A king builds a boat and rescues himself and humanity; a new era or beginning is recorded. (Also, the Eridu Genesis inscription).	COS 1.130 OTP, *31-40* RANE #5 ANET, 104-5, 512-14. ATSOT, 313	GEN. 1-11, esp. Ex. 2
Instructions for Amenemope	1926	7th-6th Century B.C.	Thebes, Egypt	Egyptian: This wisdom didactic literature encourages self-control, kindness, altruism, lack of covetousness. Its 30 chapters also stress the ideal man. Its composition was in the Ramesside era.	OTP, *274-82* COS 1.47 RANE #69 ANET, 421-25	Esp. Prov. 22-23; 24
Ludlul Bel Nemeqi	1929, 1960	2d Millennium B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: The sufferings of a noble Babylonian are somewhat reminiscent of the biblical Job. He, like Job, is restored.	COS 1.153 ANET, 434, 596-600 RANE #64	Job Wisdom Pss.
Lament over City of Ur	1888	Ca. 2000 B.C.	Nippur	Sumerian: A person that laments the fall of the city of Ur, capital of Ur III empire, making it an early "genre" like Lamentations. A sense of abandonment by the gods is strong. Gives insights into Sumer.	COS 1.166 ANET, 455-63; 611-19 OTP, **247-55** RANE 222-25	Jer., Ezek., Lamentations (over) Jerusalem; Babylon; Ur from which Abraham came
Hymn to Aten (Son Disk)	1891; 1911-14	14th Century B.C.	Amarna, Egypt	Egyptian: A poem that praises the sun with terminology that recalls Psalm 104.	COS 1.28 ANET, 369-71 OTP, *257-61* RANE, #73	Psalm 104

Negative Confessions of Innocence	1937	500 B.C. and back to 2500 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Shows a deceased person asserting their innocence by giving an exhaustive list of what they have not done.	ANET, 34-6 COS 2.12 OTP, **219-22**	Background for the OT's assertion that after death, each person will be judged
Mortuary Texts (Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead, Tomb and Grave Inscriptions)	Various	2550 B.C. and after	Egypt	Egyptian: Various texts reveal what the ancient Egyptians thought about the final state of the deceased.	COS 2.8-14	Contrast and Comparison with the OT concept of Sheol, etc. and the final state of the deceased
Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld	1937, 1942	1st half of 2d Millennium B.C.	Nippur	Sumerian: The goddess descends into the netherworld and its character and contents are encountered along the way.	ANET, 52-57 COS 1:108	Cf. OT description of Sheol
Ishtar's Descent to Netherworld	1949, 1917	1st Millennium B.C.	Ashur, Nineveh	Akkadian: Borrows and transforms to some extent the Inanna classic text.	COS 1.108 ANET, 106-8 ANETOT, 45	Cf. OT description of Sheol
Middle Assyrian Laws	1903	12th Century B.C.	Assyria	Akkadian: Laws of the Middle-Assyrian Empire ca. 12th Century B.C.	COS 2.132 ANET, 180-8 OTP, 114-23 RANE, #31	Various laws in OT: Exod. 19-24; Deut. 12-26; Lev. 17-26
Lipit-Ishtar Laws	1948	19th Century B.C.	Babylonia	Sumerian: A collection of laws to compare/ contrast to biblical laws; they also contain a prologue and epilogue.	COS 2.154 ANET, 159-60 RANE #106-109	Various laws in OT: Exod. 19-24; Deut. 12-26, etc.
Murashu Tablets	1898, 1904	5th Century B.C.	Nippur	Akkadian: Describes economic transactions between Murashu and Sons (Babylonian company) with Jews who remained in exile and other persons. Illustrates post exilic issues.	GS, 209 ATSHB, 41 ABD, 4:927-8	Insights in exile period, 538-404 B.C. Ezra-Neh.

Babylonian Theodicy	1960	Early 1st Millennium B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: A sufferer and a companion engage each other in dialogue about life; classic issues of universal wisdom literature.	COS 1.154 ANET, 601-4 OTP, *223-28* RANE #65	Job, Eccl.
Dialogue of Pessimism	1960	Early 1st Millennium B.C.	Babylon	Akkadian: A slave and his master discuss the lack of real value in anything. Death is as good an option as any and is inevitable.	COS 1.155 ANET, 600-1	Job
Egyptian Love Poetry	1932, 1945	11th-14th Century B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Fifty items in monologue form report in sensual exotic language.	ANET, 467-69; RANE 192-3 OTP, *297-301*	Song of Songs (Solomon)
Specific Love Songs	1985	11th-14th Century B. C.	Egypt	Egyptian: May be entertainment songs; boy, girl verbal exchanges featured and some monologue.	COS 1.49, 50, 51, 52	Song of Songs (Solomon)
Love Song to King	1947	2000-1500 B.C.	Nippur	Sumerian: A long song composed by a priestess in honor of the king, Shu Sin.	ANET, 496	Song of Songs and Love hymns in general in OT
Ritual of Opening/ Washing of the Mouth	1960;2001	1st Millennium B.C.; Old Kingdom	Babylon; Egypt	Akkadian; Egyptian: These are the classic texts describing the production of an image (idol) in Babylon and earlier (1600 B.C.) in Ur III to the beginning of its oracular life and the opening of the idol's mouth in Egypt.	ANETOT, 58. ATSHB, 147-49	Isa. 6; Isa. 40-55; idolatry in general in prophets; purification of prophets lips
Tell Dan Inscription	1993-4	Ca. 850 B.C.	Dan	Aramaic: This inscription contains the first reference to David outside the OT. The phrase is "house of David."	COS 2.39 OTP, *160-61* RANE #54 ROT, 17, 92 IR, 62, 199	Historical reign of David: 1-2 Sam., 1 Kgs., etc.; 1 Kgs. 19:16-17; 2 Kgs. 9-10; Hos. 1:4

Yavneh Yam (workman's plea)	1960	Late 7th Century	Mesad Hashavyahu	Hebrew: This short letter on an ostracon contains the request for a fieldworker to have his cloak returned to him which his supervisor had confiscated unjustly.	COS 3.41 RANE #58 OTP, *331-32*	Ex. 22:25-5; Deut. 24:12-17; Prov. 14:9; 25:20
Sumerian Proverbs	1980, 1997	2600-2000 B.C.	Sumer/ Assyria/ Babylon	Sumerian: Illustrates the ancient nature and subject matter of proverbs in the Ancient NE across cultures.	COS 1.174; 1.175	Proverbs; Ecclesiastes (Proverbs)
Hittite Proverbs	1960 1984 1986 1992	13th Century (?)	Hattusas	Hittite: Various proverbs scattered throughout Hittite literature and a bilingual wisdom text.	COS 1.81, 82	OT proverbs in general, Proverbs, Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2
Wisdom of Ahiqar	1906	700-650 B. C.	Assyrian Court	Aramaic: In addition to an intriguing Assyrian court tale, the words of this wise court official give proverbial instructions for training children, piety, humility, and maintaining controlled speech.	ANET, 427-30 OTP, *283-88* RANE #70	Court story and historical narrative; proverbs and wisdom literature; cf. also Judg. 9:8-15; 2 Kgs. 14:9; Prov., Job, Eccl., and Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai.
Neo-Assyrian Prophecy	1912 1916	8th-7th Century	Assyria	Akkadian: Texts record how prophets/ prophetesses functioned under Esarhaddon/ Ashurbanipal. Ishtar intercedes for her favored king and also does battle for him.	RANE #80 ANET, 449-51; 605-6 ATSHB, 227-29	Illustrates functions of prophecy, prophets outside Israel
Prophecies of Neferti	1900	Ca. 1990 B.C.	Egypt	Egyptian: Neferti relates the downfall of the king to Pharaoh Snefru (2680-2564 B.C.) and predicts the rise of the great Pharaoh Amenemhet I (1991-1960 B.C.).	OTP, 235-40 ANET, 444-46 COS 1.45; RANE 210-12 ATSHB, 245	Cf. Dan. 2-6; I Kgs. 13

Zakkur Inscription	1907-8	800 B.C.	North Syria	Aramaic: Zakkur, king of Hamath, gives due recognition to his god, Baal-Shamayin. Shows devotion to a god by a faithful king. Mentions Ben-Hadad, son of Hazael, historical figure from the OT.	ANET, 655-56 COS 2.35; RANE 163-5	Kgs. 15; 19; 20; 2 Kings. 6; 8; 13

This list of key ANE texts and artifacts has helped scholars paint, with a broad brush at least (and in some cases with some detail), a broad backdrop of worldviews that were present during the time of the Old Testament across the centuries and millennia—worldviews that help place the Old Testament into a context that enables us to better understand its history, its literary qualities, and even its theological claims and perspectives. From this impressive accumulation of ANE data, some scholars have attempted to present at least preliminary contours of the world of the Old Testament. This is buttressed firmly by the facts from this huge cache of ANE materials that make the reliability of the Old Testament arguably firm and trustworthy, especially so given the literary and historiographical perspectives of its narratives. Certain of these materials show Israel as a fellow participant in the ANE of her day, yet also distinct from that world at crucial points where they intersect. She shared in the worldviews of those cultures and eras. But just as firmly certain materials, texts and artifacts, show striking contrasts between Israel and the world in which she lived—a world in which she believed that her God, Yahweh, guided her and desired for her, through her placement in that culture, to point the surrounding nations to the LORD, the God of creation, history, culture, politics, economics, sociology, psychology, nature; that is, to the God of gods.

The column labeled "Ancient Sources" provides readers with ample materials that will enable them to read the primary materials in English translation. The primary and secondary list of resources below includes further discussions of these materials and their significance for the study of the OT. In addition, taken as a whole, the secondary resources direct readers to exhaustive listings of many more ancient texts/artifacts for the study of the OT and its conceptual world.

Primary Texts Relating to the Old Testament (in English Translation)

Bill T. Arnold & Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for OT Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). (RANE)

William W. Hallo, ed., K. L. Younger, Jr., assoc. ed., *The Context of Scripture*, 3 vols. (Boston: 2003). (COS)

Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 vols. (Berkley: University of California Press, 1971-80). (AEL)

James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). (ANET)

Secondary Sources that Discuss and Provide Additional Readings of Primary Materials and Old Testament

David W. Baker & Bill T. Arnold, eds., *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999). (FOTS)

John D. Currid, *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible: A Basic Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

David N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992). (ABD)

Rachel S. Hallote, *Death, Burial, and Afterlife in the Biblical World* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001). (DBA)

Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). (IR)

Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998). (AOT)

David M. Howard, Jr., & Michael A. Grisanti, eds., *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003) (GS)

K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003). (ROT)

Victor H. Matthews & Don C. Benjamin, eds, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991, 1997 [cited in italic pagination], 2006 [cited in bold pagination]). (OTP)

Anson R. Rainey and R. S. Notley, *The Sacred Bridge* (Carta, Jerusalem: Carta, 2006). (SB)

Suzanne Richard, *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003). (NEA)

Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 2005). (ATSHB)

John H. Walton, *Ancient Year Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). (ANETOT)

John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). (AILCC)

Book Reviews

The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine

Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8308-3446-4; 118 PAGES, HARDCOVER, $16.00

Since arriving on the scene late in 2006, atheist Richard Dawkins's sophomoric decrial of religion, *The God Delusion*, has sparked wide discussion. Preceded by numerous review-length responses (notably Alvin Plantinga's "The Dawkins Confusion," Books and Culture, March-April 2007, pp. 21-24), Alister McGrath's *The Dawkins Delusion* is the welcome first book-length critique of Dawkins's latest work. Happily, one could hardly imagine a scholar better suited to the task. Holding doctorates in both molecular biophysics and theology, McGrath is himself a former atheist (having become a Christian as an adult). He spent a number of years teaching historical theology at Oxford, where Dawkins is a scientist, and now heads up the Centre for Theology, Religion and Culture at King's College, London.

As McGrath notes in his introduction, responding to *The God Delusion* is difficult given the sheer volume of its flagrant misrepresentations of religion, vitriolic polemics, dogmatism, and general lack of interest in genuinely engaging religious believers (tendencies, I would add, that are typical of the so-called "new atheists"). He nevertheless sets calmly about his task, ably exposing Dawkins's presuppositions and unfounded assertions one after the other. Indeed, given the philosophical nature of Dawkins's claims coupled with his status as a scientist, reading McGrath's book is often, as Logan Gage put it, "like watching one schoolboy do another's work" by "pointing out what Dawkins is obligated to show in order to make his case" (Christianity Today, November, 2007).

The Dawkins Delusion comprises four short chapters, each responding to a representative "argument" from *The God Delusion.* Chapter one takes up the question, "Deluded about God?" McGrath begins by correcting Dawkins's definition of faith. Being intrinsically irrational, faith, Dawkins claims, is "blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence." Of course, as McGrath shows, such a spectacularly question-begging definition is unfounded.

In his pretentiously titled fourth chapter, "Why there almost certainly is no God," Dawkins offers "the central argument" of *The God Delusion*, the crux of which has become Dawkins's catch phrase: "Who designed the Designer?" He asserts that God, as the explanation of our complex universe, must himself be highly complex, which greatly diminishes the probability that God exists. Given Dawkins's lofty regard for this argument, one wishes McGrath's treatment of it were more thorough. But he rightly questions the "leap from the recognition of complexity to the assertion of improbability" (p. 28) by noting that despite the highly improbable odds to the contrary, humans exist. Unfortunately, however, he passes on the opportunity to expound the many flaws of Dawkins's argument. For example, even if each of the six steps (calling them premises won't do) of Dawkins's argument were granted, the conclusion—that "God almost certainly doesn't exist"—is a non sequitur.

In the second chapter, McGrath considers the question, "Has science disproved God?" For Dawkins, that science disproves God is a foregone conclusion. So, when the late atheist Stephen Jay Gould concedes the compatibility of leading scientific beliefs with either atheism or theism, Dawkins dismisses him out of hand (p. 34). As McGrath notes, the upshot of Gould's statement is that there are limits to science, which Dawkins vehemently denies. Whereas Gould proposes the idea of the NOMA (nonoverlapping magisteria) of science and religion, Dawkins affirms a single magisterium: empirical reality (p. 40). In response, McGrath offers a third option: POMA (partially overlapping magisteria), which allows for the mutual benefit of science

and religion's interaction—a view taken, for example, by Francis Collins, director of the National Human Genome Research Institute and point-man for the Human Genome Project.

Chapter three asks, "What are the origins of religion?" Locating Dawkins in the tradition of Ludwig Feuerbach, McGrath critiques his naturalistic explanation of religion that theistic belief must be an "accidental [evolutionary] byproduct" of some sort (p. 55). Besides enjoying no scientific evidence, the foundation of Dawkins's theory is rife with problems. McGrath highlights Dawkins's suspect definition of "religion" (p. 59f), before engaging his claim that despite having no selective advantage in its own right, humans are nevertheless psychologically primed for religion because it confers selective advantage in other areas of life (p. 65). Given Dawkins's tendency to boil religion down to beliefs, such as "God exists," an interesting problem (which McGrath does not identify) arises. If, as naturalist neuroscientist Patricia Churchland explains, "boiled down to essentials, a nervous system enables the organism to succeed in the four F's: feeding, fleeing, fighting, and reproducing" ("Epistemology in the Age of Neuroscience," Journal of Philosophy 84 [Oct. 1987]), then it's difficult to place much confidence in any human beliefs; evolutionary selections are made, so to speak, with an eye toward human behavior, not beliefs. McGrath does, however, rightly criticize Dawkins's notions of belief in God as a "virus of the mind" and the "God-meme" as ridiculous pseudo-science.

The final and longest chapter of the book takes up the question, "Is religion evil?" Not surprisingly, Dawkins thinks it is. After all, he reasons, a religion worshipping "a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak; a . . .capriciously malevolent bully" (p. 75) must be evil. Fortunately, as McGrath explains, Christians don't worship any such being. Moreover, evils like violence are by no means necessary to religion. Rather, they are the result of (fallen) human nature. McGrath rounds out the chapter by correcting Dawkins's many mistakes regarding Jesus' teachings, especially on the Old Testament.

Refusing to be distracted by the pejorative, vitriolic nature of Dawkins's polemics, McGrath has provided what is, for the most part, an outstanding response to Dawkins's *The God Delusion.* Despite its many qualities, however, *The Dawkins Delusion* leaves me with a few quibbles. First, though McGrath identifies and treats the central points of Dawkins's book, I found myself repeatedly wishing for broader, fuller responses (not deeper or more scholarly, mind you—the book is written for non-scholars, after all). For example, though mentioning science's dependence on "inductive reasoning" and highlighting Dawkins's repeated yet decidedly unscientific interpretations of data (pp. 35-36), one wonders why McGrath doesn't expound on the limits of science—especially given Dawkins's scientism. Claims of the sort "only knowledge acquired via science is true" are blatantly self-refuting; the goals, methodology, and presuppositions (e.g., validity of the laws of logic) obviously cannot be validated by science, either. There is also McGrath's cryptic remark that Evangelicals "believe passionately in God but eschew religious behavior" (p. 63). What could be meant by this? Surely McGrath is aware of the Evangelical wings of both the Anglican and Catholic churches? Besides, I certainly consider such practices as the taking of the Eucharist and baptism to be rituals or "religious behavior." Finally, McGrath mistakenly accuses the intelligent design movement of employing a "god-of-the-gaps" argument (p. 30). Intelligent design proponents do not merely argue from "naturalistic ignorance," appealing to God only upon discovering explanatory gaps. Rather, they argue via inference-to-the-best-explanation that an intelligent designer is necessary (contra the blind watchmaker thesis). McGrath specifies that he rejects ID on theological grounds, as well, but unfortunately he doesn't elaborate.

These concerns notwithstanding, that it is Dawkins who is deluded about God is clearly established by this book.

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God's Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church

Gerald R. McDermott. Downers Grove, IL.: IVP Academic, 2007.

ISBN 978-0-8308-2564-6; 173 PAGES, PAPERBACK, $18.00.

As Christian apologists interacting regularly with people of various creeds, faiths, and religious traditions, we have likely all spent time pondering the question posed in the subtitle of Gerald McDermott's latest work, *God's Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions?* However, it is one thing to ponder this question and quite another to attempt to answer it (and yet another to publish one's attempt). In *God's Rivals*, McDermott courageously but humbly attempts the latter. In the introduction he offers his primary thesis: "If there is one theme, or red thread, that runs through the following chapters, it is this: the biblical authors and early church theologians saw the religions not simply as human constructions but as spiritual projects as well" (11). Based on this insight, McDermott attempts to find the happy medium between the "fundamentalist extreme" that views all non-Christian religions as entirely demonic and "religious relativism," which views all religions as equally salvific ways to God.

After a couple chapters laying out the primary issues he wishes to address, McDermott takes a chapter each to discuss the Old Testament and New Testament views on other religions, followed by a chapter each discussing the views of Church Fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Finally, in the last chapter, McDermott ties together all the data from these various sources to address the questions: What are the religions? And why are they there?

Based on his survey of the OT passages dealing with other religions, McDermott discusses four views hinted at in the text: (1) "neighborly pluralism," the idea that each nation has its own god, and as long as everyone keeps to themselves, everything is fine; (2)

"competitive pluralism," similar to the above idea, only now the nation-gods are in competition; (3) "vehement missionary exclusivism," the idea that there is truly only one God, Yahweh, and that all peoples of all nations should serve him; and finally, (4) the "cosmic war view," in which the cosmos is populated by a multitude of beings, warring against each other for the world's destiny. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, McDermott rejects (3) and opts for a combination of (1), (2), and (4). He argues that according to a theory-neutral reading of the OT data, one finds that the other gods really do exist. As he describes it, the cosmic war view "rejects the 'Yahweh alone' view that denies the existence of any other gods. It might refuse to call them 'gods,' but when it does that it is only quibbling with words" (63).

McDermott next discusses how these gods are described in the NT as "principalities and powers," offering biblical and historical evidence for pairing these OT and NT notions. In the remaining chapters, then, he describes in fascinating detail the Church Fathers' views on these spiritual beings and how these views might help us understand the phenomenon of religious diversity today. According to McDermott's account, God initially created these beings with the purpose of watching over the nations and directing the people of the earth to worship God and obey the law. Instead, these beings distorted their role by directing worship to themselves and making people slaves to the law. Nevertheless, in God's providence, he uses these distorted representatives to instill in people an understanding of their inability to follow the law and their need for a redeemer. Thus, despite the distortions in other religions, they contain elements of truth that can potentially lead people in the direction of Christ.

With *God's Rivals* McDermott has done the evangelical world a great service by engaging the question of religious diversity in a fresh way. Nevertheless, this book is not without room for critique. First, we might want to question whether it is really "quibbling with words" to refuse to use the term "gods" as McDermott suggests. For if we take his suggestion at face value, what he is proposing is some form of *polytheism*, the existence of a multitude of gods. While McDermott acknowledges outright that these gods are created beings by the One Creator God, Yahweh, he nonetheless maintains that they are, in fact, *gods*. But as Keith Yandell often reminds his students, there are no

levels of divinity; you either are or you aren't. We might thus be willing to concede with McDermott that there are other powerful beings in the cosmos, but I think we should continue to quibble over the fact that they are not *gods*. It seems that McDermott has made the mistake of reading the OT's *description* of people's beliefs in other gods as the OT's *endorsement* of the view that there actually are other gods. (See George Mavrodes's anthologized article, "Polytheism," for a rather humorous satire of this kind of reading of the OT.)

Secondly, McDermott is forthright with the concession that "my treatment of these texts and issues reflects my Reformed theology. In other words, I believe in a big God who works in ways that burst all of our conceptual boxes—with contrasting approaches which sometimes seem paradoxical or even contradictory to us but which for him are no problem" (18). While his Reformed theology should not be a problem for most readers, the way he details his "big God" is at points problematic. For example, McDermott writes, "Satan is a creation of God enforcing God's law through a 'ministry' of accusation. . . . As Paul's Jewish contemporary Philo put it, God rules through intermediate powers, *who are servants to do things not appropriate to God himself*" (79, italics mine). It appears, then, that one of "our conceptual boxes" that God is not limited to is the idea of *moral perfection*. God has revealed himself to us as a perfectly holy and righteous God, but according to McDermott's suggestion here, God works in ways "contradictory" to this by delegating the dirty work to his servants—apparently including Satan. On this proposal Yahweh sounds more like the *Godfather* than the Christian God. I think this understanding should cause any reader, Reformed or otherwise, to be a bit uneasy with McDermott's proposal.

Finally, I have another minor issue with this book that as a Christian philosopher I cannot help but mention, though it is not directly pertinent to his thesis. In his discussion of Justin Martyr's view that ancient Greek philosophy offered "seeds of the Word," McDermott gives a rather misleading description of the current state of philosophy. He states, "Remember, the ancient world's conception of philosophy was very different from our own. We typically think, with some good reason, that philosophy is for those who have given up on religion. So if you want to find God, you would not go first

to the philosophers. But in the second century, most religious seekers pursued Greek philosophy with the intent of finding God" (88). One might think that this paragraph was written in the 1950s. Certainly the legacy of Marx, Nietzsche, Russell, and Ayer is still felt strongly in philosophy today, but given the renaissance of Christian philosophy in the last half-century, McDermott's comments unfortunately only serve to propagate the lingering stereotype of contemporary philosophy as an anti-Christian discipline. This stereotype is damaging for the church (not to mention Christian philosophers) and should be eradicated as soon as possible.

But all quibbling aside, I believe *God's Rivals* is a helpful resource for anyone wrestling with the issue of religious diversity. I would especially recommend this book to those who find themselves in either the fundamentalist or the relativist camp or for those who would simply like to see how the Church Fathers addressed similar concerns. *God's Rivals* might leave the reader with more questions than she began with, but with this issue that is probably a good thing. As far too many Christians think their understanding of other religions and the people who adhere to them is *the* absolute Christian view, this book does a good job at calling that confidence into question. For that accomplishment alone, McDermott should be applauded. And while McDermott's proposal is not without problems, we can appreciate his attempt to answer these difficult questions from a biblical and historical standpoint. We thus might view McDermott's work in the legacy of Francis Schaeffer and his ilk, namely, those Christian thinkers who are bold enough to ask the difficult questions that many would rather ignore, who have the ingenuity to offer novel solutions, but whose solutions might occasionally miss the mark.

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